Tests: Kawasaki Voyager XII, Yamaha FJ1200, Honda XR250R, Honda XR200R

CYCLE GUIDE

CYCLE GUIDE

02763

- Kawasaki 900 Ninja?
- Kawasaki Ninja 1000R?
- Suzuki GSX-R1100?
- Yamaha FJ1200?
- Yamaha V-Max?

JULY 1986
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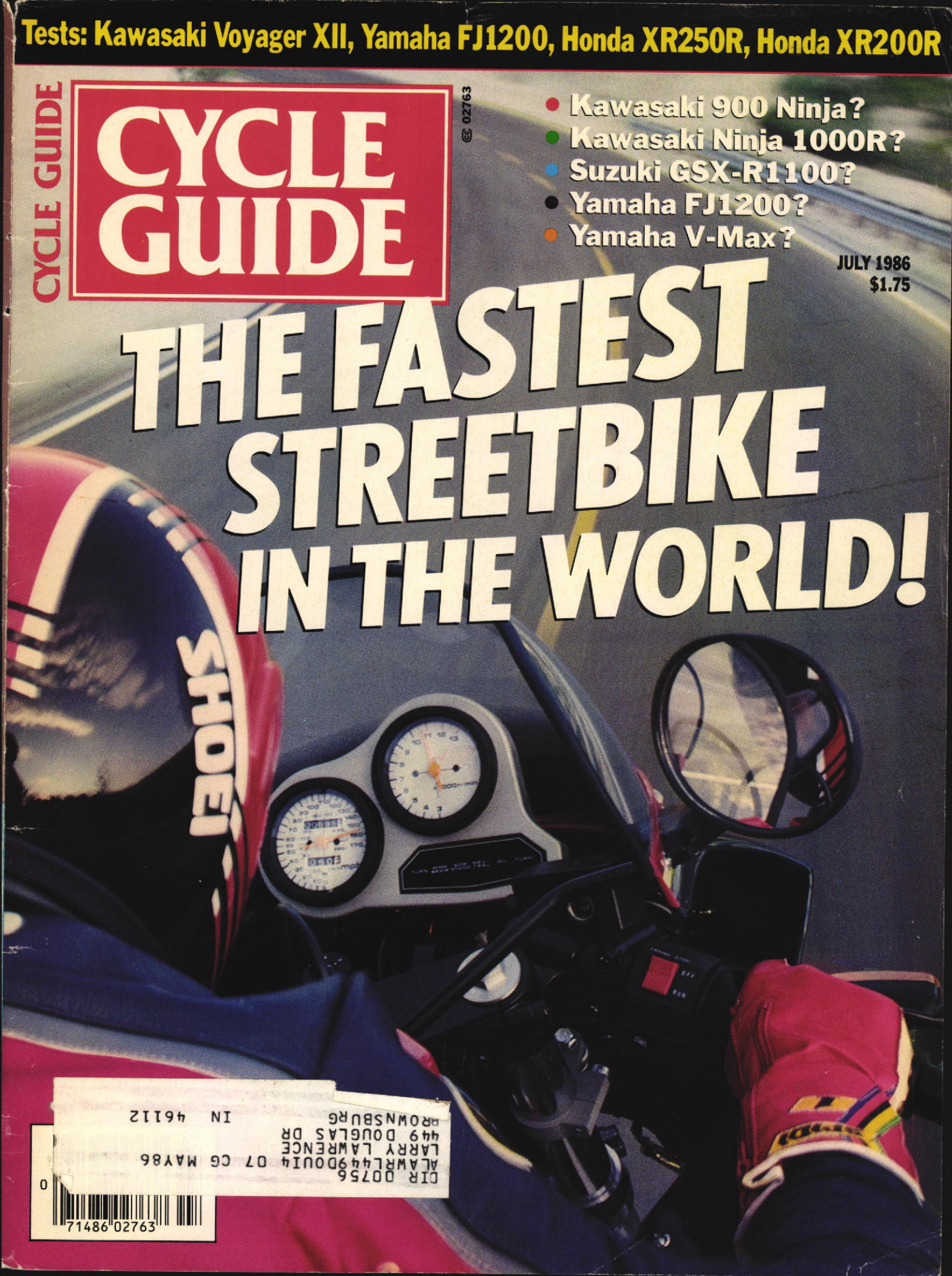

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QUOTE: "A driver is like a spark plug. If it doesn't work, you unscrew it and put in another one."

—Pg. 69

ON THE COVER:
Summertime blues got you down? Try some speed—top-speed that is, as dealer Mike Gillies leads photographer David Dewhurst through a high-speed therapy session. Check page 20 to find the best remedy for the 55-mph syndrome from among today's big-bores.

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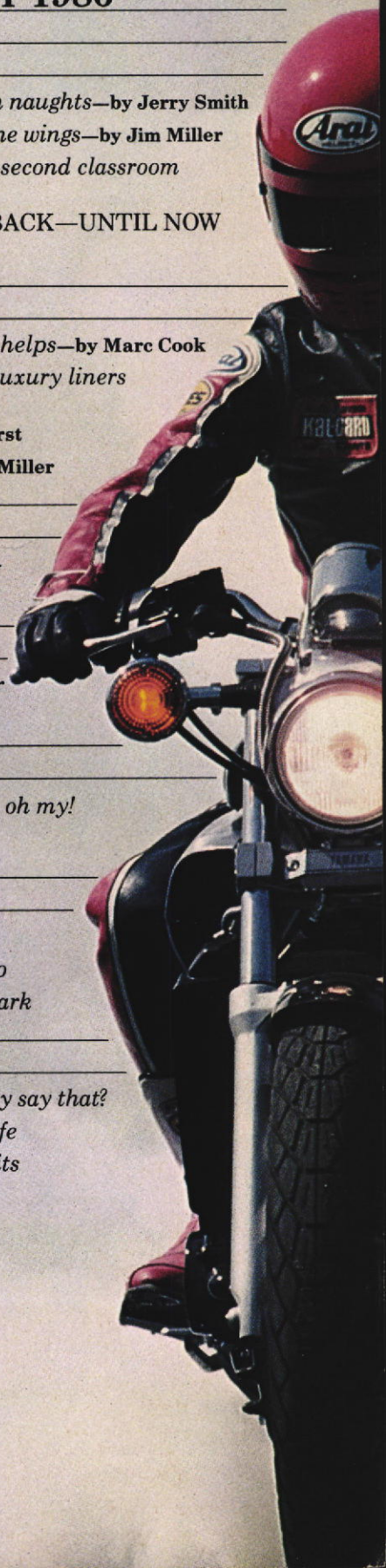
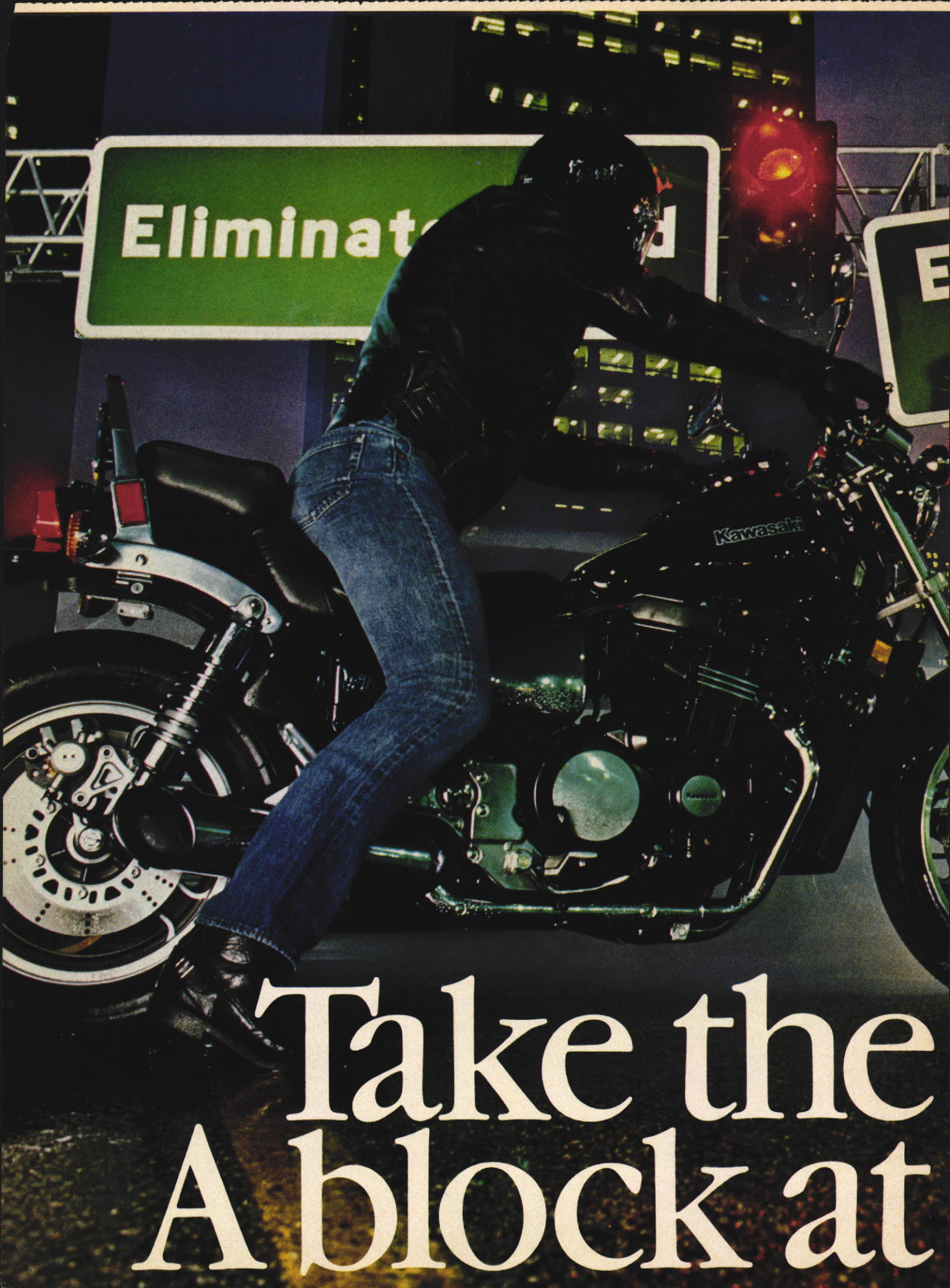
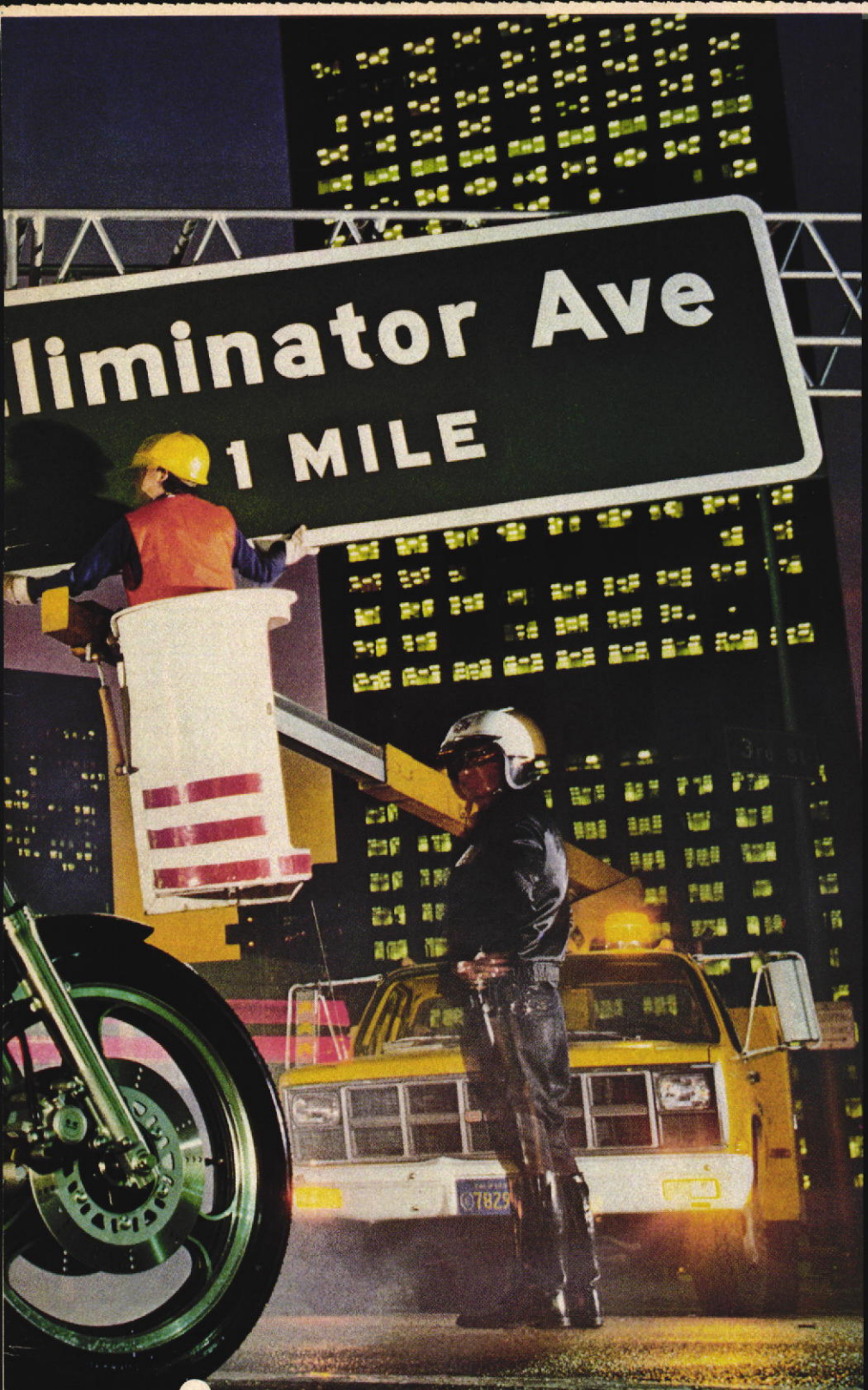




Take the A block at



city. a time.

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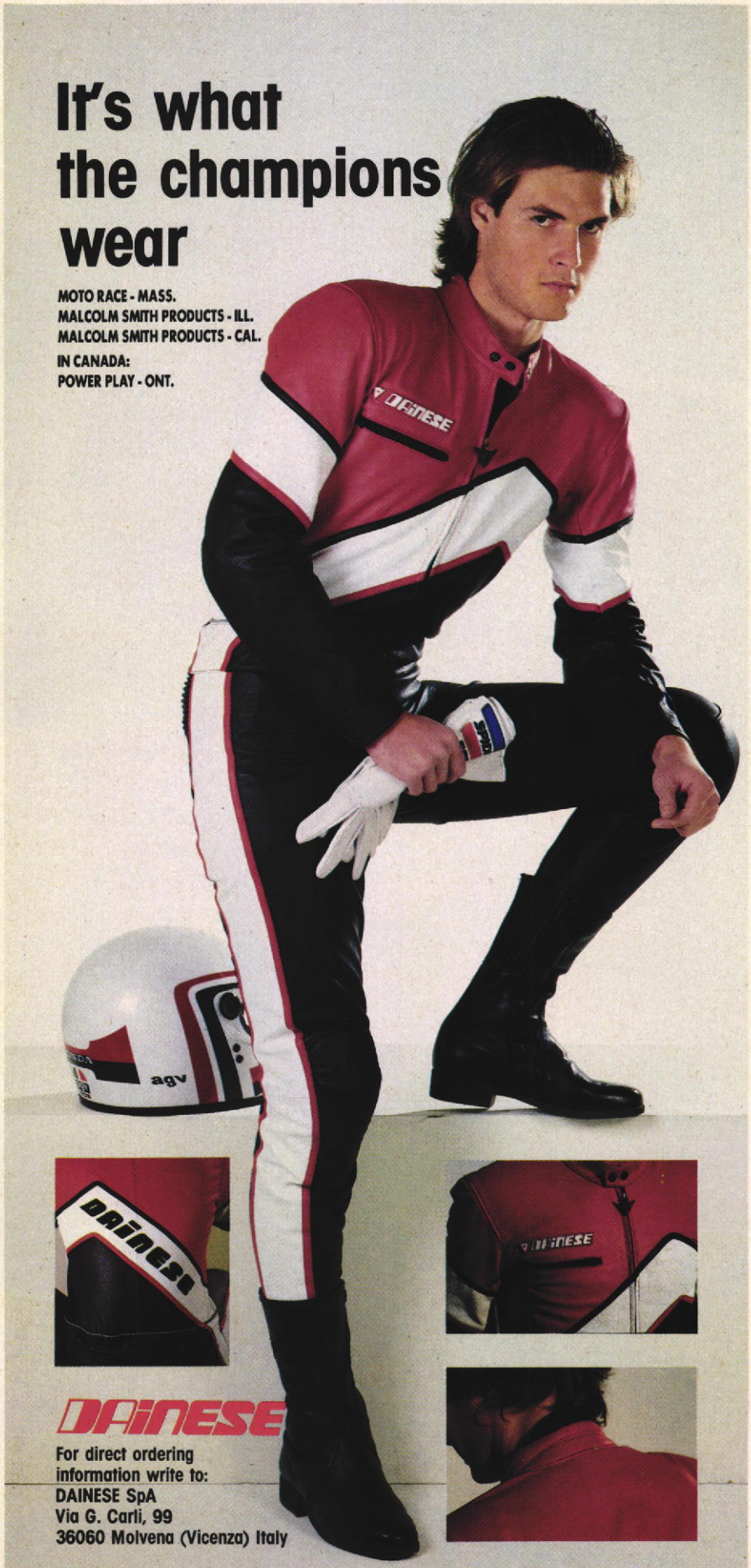

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CYCLE GUIDE

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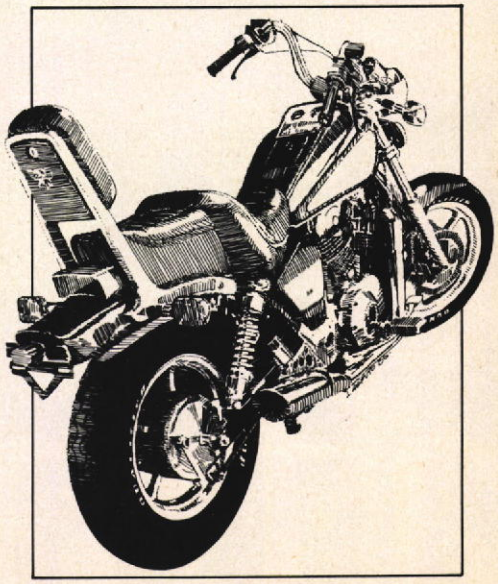

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130/90V16	$67.95	MT-29 FRONT	
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120/90V17	$65.95	110/90V16	$57.95
+130/90V17	$68.95	120/80V16	$57.95
140/80V17	Rc$80.95	120/80V16MT-28	$60.95
110/90V18	$55.95	100/90V18	$50.95
110/90V18	Frt$53.95	110/90V18	$53.95
350V18	Front..$52.95	110/90V18MT-28	$53.95
400V18	$57.95	350V18	MT-28..$52.95
+120/80V18	$62.95	100/90V19	$58.95
+120/90V18	$62.95	325V19	$55.95
+130/80V18	$67.95	350V19	$60.95
140/70V18	Rc$86.95	350V19MT-28	$69.95
+Race Compound	add $10.00		

Note: All MT-28 Front Tires are race compound.

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140/90VR15	$93.95	120/80VR16	$71.95
150/90VR15	$93.95	110/90VR18	$74.95
140/90VR16	$93.95	100/90VR19	$74.95
150/90VR16	$93.95		
140/80VR17	$93.95		
150/80VR18	$93.95		

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130/90H16RWL	$62.95	120/80V16	$44.95
140/90H16	$58.95	90/90H18	$38.95
140/90H16RWL	$66.95	100/90V18	$49.95
150/80V16	$58.95	110/90V18	$56.95
120/90H17	$51.95	120/90H18RWL	$61.95
130/90V17	$57.95	90/90H19	$39.95
110/90H18	$51.95	100/90V19	$53.95
120/90V18	$57.95	100/90H19RWL	$61.95
130/80V18	$59.95		

HI-SPORT Tg-22		HI-SPORT TG-11	
160/80V16	$102.49	120/70V16	$74.49
160/60V17	$99.49	120/80V16	$74.49
130/70V18	$84.49	100/80V18	$69.49
140/70V18	$88.49	110/80V18	$78.49
160/60V18	$98.49	110/80V19	$80.49

HI-TOUR Rear		HI-TOUR Front	
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140/90H16RWL	$74.49	120/90H18RWL	$62.49

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F200 Front		R200 Rear	
90/90H19	$38.50	140/90H15	$51.50
*100/90H19	$40.50	*130/90H16	$48.50
*110/90H19	$42.50	*130/90H17	$49.50
		120/90H18	$50.50
*RWL	add $3.00	*130/90H18	$51.50

F100 Front		R100 Rear	
120/90V16	$44.50	130/90V16	$52.50
100/90V18	$42.50	140/90V16	$57.50
110/90V18	$43.50	130/90V17	$57.50
100/90V19	$44.50	120/90V18	$55.50
110/90V19	46.50	130/90V18	$57.50

REAR		FRONT	
120/90S-16	Y987$46.95	300S18	1/986..$29.95
MT90-16	Y957..$47.95	325S18	Y990..$32.95
450H17	Y987..$49.95	300S18	Y986..$29.95
300 18	Y955..$24.95	90/90S18	Y994$37.95
325 18	Y955..$26.95	100/90S18	Y994$41.95
350 18	Y955..$27.95	110/90S18	Y994$46.95
400 18	Y955..$32.95	325H19	Y990..$43.95
450 18	Y955..$37.95	325H19	Y994..$43.95
Y60H18	Y955..$59.95	350H19	Y990..$44.95
		410H19	Y984..$47.95
		100/90H19	Y984$49.95

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350Hx18	$41.50	450Hx17	$54.50
325Hx19	$44.50	350Hx18	$43.50
350Hx19	$46.50	400Hx18	$48.50
		425Hx18	$49.50
SUPERTWIN		120/90Hx18	$49.50
TK22		TK44	
100/90V16	$53.50	120/90V16	$56.50
100/90V18	$48.50	130/90V16	$65.50
110/90V18	$50.50	130/90V16RWL	$74.50
120/90V18RWL	$56.50	140/90V16RWL	$75.50
325V19	$48.50	130/90V17	$64.50
350V19	$52.50	130/90V17RWL	$68.50
350V19RWL	$58.50	400V18	$53.50
100/90V19	$54.50	425/85V18	$60.50
		130/90V18	$61.50
BLITZ			
TKH24 Rear		TKH23 Front	
150/90H15	$84.95	110/90H18	$52.95
120/90H16	$61.95	100/90H19	$56.95
130/90H16	$68.95	110/90H19	$57.96
140/90H16	$74.95	IF YOU DON'T	
120/90H18	$63.95	SEE IT, CALL	
130/90H18	$69.95	TOLL-FREE!	
TKV-12 REAR			
130/90V16	$67.49	150/70V18	$87.49
150/80V16	$82.49	TKV-11 FRONT	
130/90V17	$66.49	110/90V16	$54.49
140/80V17	$73.49	120/80V16	$57.49
120/90V18	$63.49	100/90V18	$49.49
130/80V18	$69.49	110/90V18	$52.49
150/70V18	$87.49	100/90V19	$56.49

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140/90H16	$38.88	110/90H18	$33.88
120/90H17	$33.88	110/90H19	$32.88
130/90H17	$36.88	110/90H19	$34.88
110/90H18	$33.88	120/90H19	$37.88
120/90H18	$36.88		
130/90H18	$37.88	FREE FREIGHT	

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Continental Tube	$11.95

BRIDGESTONE

SE-22 Rear		SE21 Front	
140/90H15RWL	$63.50	130/90H16RWL	$59.50
150/90H15RWL	$69.50	100/90H18	$42.50
*130/90H16	$54.50	*110/90H18	$45.50
140/90H16RWL	$64.50	120/90H18RWL	$55.50
*130/90H17	$55.50	*90/90H19	$44.50
110/90H18	$50.50	*100/90H19	$47.50
120/90H18	$52.50	*110/90H19	$49.50
*130/90H18	$70.50	*RWL	add $3.00
SE-02 Rear		SE-01 Front	
150/80V16	$76.50	100/90V16	$57.50
130/90V17	$61.50	120/80V16	$66.50
140/80V17	$72.50	100/90V18	$48.50
120/90V18	$58.50	110/90V18	$51.50
130/80V18	$64.50	100/90V19	$53.50
140/80V18	$70.50		

DUNLOP

K291T Rear		Front	
MV85S15RWL	$85.50	MT90S16RWL	$66.50
MT90S16	$68.50	MR90S18RWL	$60.50
MT90S16SWW	$79.50	MM90H19	$56.50
MU90S16RWL	$77.50	SWW - Single White Wall	
MT90S17	$66.50	RWL - Raised White Lettering	
MP90H18	$62.50		
K391 Sport Elite			
Rear		Front	
⌐120/90V16	$53.50	* 100/90V16	$51.50
⌐130/90V16	$63.50	* 120/80V16	$52.50
* 150/80V16	$75.50	* 120/90V16	$53.50
⌐*120/80V18	$57.50	⌐100/90V18	$46.50
* 140/80V17	$66.50	* 110/90V18RbRwl	$58.50
⌐*120/80V18	$57.50	* 100/90V19	$52.50
⌐*130/80V18	$63.50	⌐100/80V19Rib	$51.50
140/80V18Rc	$80.50	⌐RWL	add $10.00
* 100/90V19	$52.50	* Race	add $10.00
K700 Radial			
130/80VR16	$102.50	120/90VR18	$93.50
150/80VR16	$123.50	120/90VR18Rc	$108.50
150/80VR16Rc	$138.50	130/80VR18	$103.50
130/80VR17	$99.50	130/80VR18Rc	$118.50
140/80VR117	$109.50		

STOCK REPLACEMENT

K181		K425	
*MT90x16	$71.50	160/80H15	$71.95
*MJ90x19	$56.50	K627 Rear	
*RWL	add $3.00	140/80H15 RWL	$61.95
K525		*150/90H15	$64.95
150/90V15 RWL	$74.95	*130/90H16	$51.95
F11 Front		140/90-16 RWL	$68.95
*130/90H16	$48.95	120/90V17	$48.95
120/90H18 RWL	$49.95	130/90V17	$52.95
*100/90H19	$37.95	110/90H18	$43.95
*110/90H19	$44.95	130/80-18	$55.95
*RWL	add $10.00	*RWL	add $10.00

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MT90H16RWL	$66.88	⌐120/80V16	$63.88
* 140/90V16	$66.88	* 130/90H16	$65.88
+⌐150/80V16	$72.88	⌐100/80V18	$60.88
120/90V17	$62.88	⌐110/90V18	$61.88
⌐130/90V17	$64.88	* 120/90H18	$60.88
140/80V17	$69.88	MJ90H19RWL	$57.88
140/80V17 MBS RC	$93.49	⌐325V19	$57.88
400V18	$54.88	⌐350V19	$60.88
110/80H18	$64.88	ME-88 TOURING	
⌐125/85V18	$60.88	* 150/90H15	$74.88
120/90V18	$60.88	* 130/90H16	$67.88
120/90V18 MBS Rc	$84.49	* MU90H16	$71.88
+⌐130/80V18	$66.88	140/90H16	$70.88
150/70V18		* 130/90H17	$69.88
MBS Race	$86.49	* 120/90H18	$67.88
*Raised White Letters Add	$10.00	⌐Race Compound add	$10.00
		+MBS Add	$25.00

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IRC

HS210 Rear		HS210 Front	
120/90H16	$39.50	110/90H18	$38.50
*120/90H16	$49.50	120/90H18RWL	$45.50
*140/90H16	$51.50	90/90H19	$39.50
*130/90H17	$49.50	*100/90H19	$41.50
120/90H18	$46.50		
130/90H18	$51.50	*RWL	Add $5.00

DURO TOUR

VS-17 Rear			
120/80V16	$48.88	130/80V18	$57.88
130/80V16	$57.88	Front	
130/80V17	$56.88	120/80V16	$49.88
120/80V18	$53.88	100/90V19	$49.88
HS310- Rear		Front	
140/90H15 RWL	$55.88	120/80H16 RWL	$45.88
150/90H15 RWL	$58.88	100/90H18	$43.88
120/90H16	$43.88	*110/90H18	$44.88
*130/90H16	$53.88	*100/90H19	$45.88
*130/90H17	$54.88	*RWL	add $3.00
*130/90H18	$55.88		

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MT90S-16BW	$69.50	140/90V-16BW	$58.95
MT90S-16RWL	$74.50	130/90V-17BW	$56.95
MU90S-16BW—	$71.50	110/90V-18BW	$46.95
MU90S-16RWL	$76.50	120/90V-18BW	$52.95
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MT90H-17RWL	$70.50	110/90V-19BW	$48.95
MP90H-18BW	$61.50	ARROW ST	
MP90H-18RWL	$66.50	120/90H-18BW	43.95
MR90H-18BW	$63.50	90/90H-19BW	$42.95
MR90H-18RWL	$68.50	100/90H-19BW	$42.95
MM90H-19BW	$55.50	130/80S-16BW	$45.95
MM90H-19RWL	$60.50	130/100A-16BW	$48.95
		120/80H-17BW	$41.95
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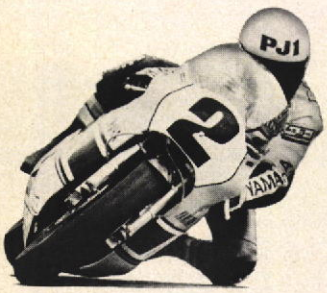
"It's amazing to see what people use to lubricate their motorcycle chains. These aren't sewing machines or gate hinges, but expensive drive chains. Blue Label, PJ1's chain lube with synthetic sperm oil, gives true high mileage protection against wear, stretch and corrosion for standard and O ring type chains. Blue Label goes on thin for deep penetration and evaporates quickly, leaving a tough coating that won't fly off! Blue Label will keep O rings soft and pliable. You should see how fast those other oils deteriorate rubber O rings, allowing dirt to get to the rollers.

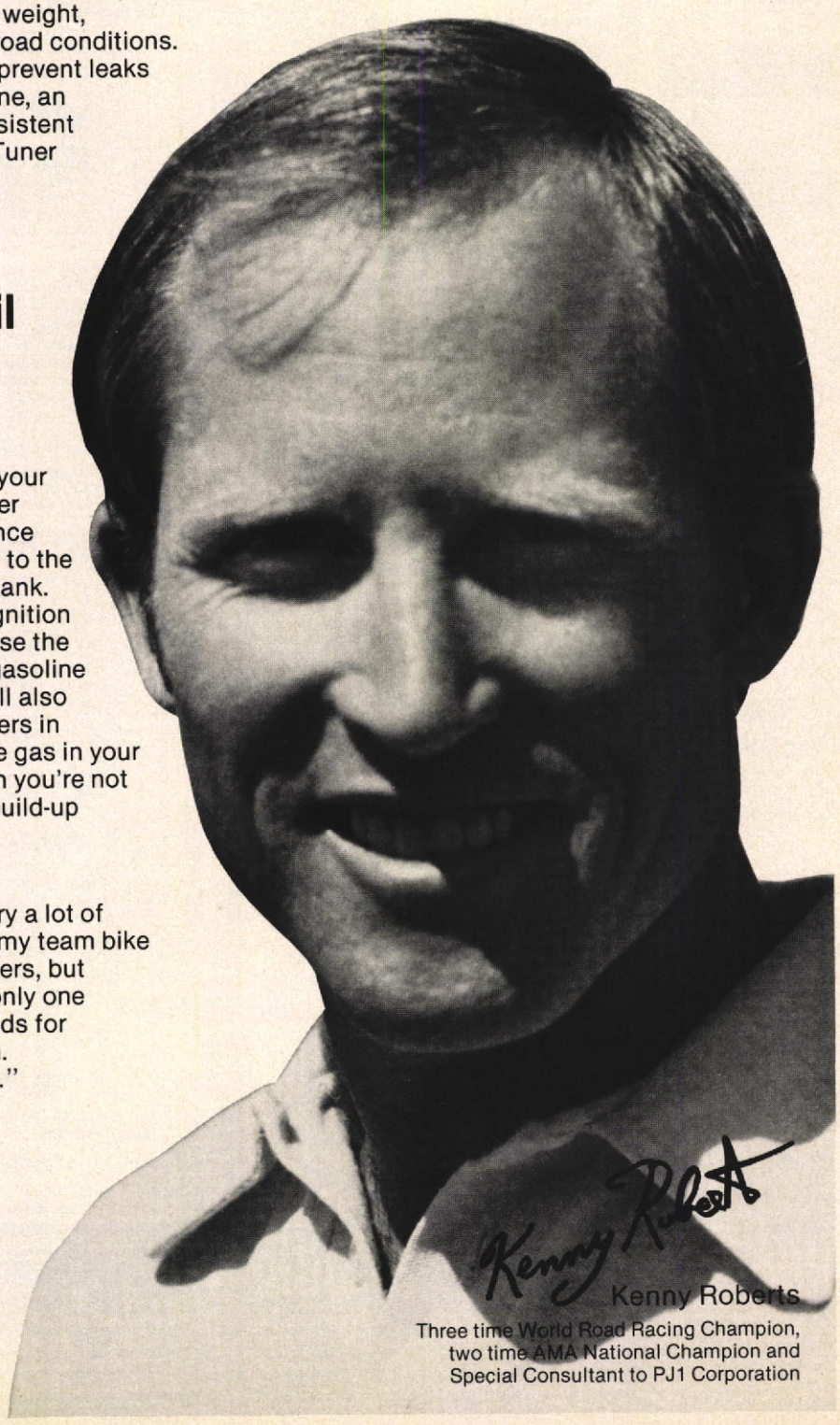
Production bikes don't handle like my Formula I racer, but you can improve response and handling with PJ1 Fork Tuner. PJ1 comes in eight different thicknesses to tune your ride to combined bike and rider weight, temperature changes and road conditions. Fork Tuner swells seals to prevent leaks and contains organosiloxane, an antifoaming agent, for consistent damping action. PJ1 Fork Tuner is the trick answer for rear shock performance too.

"There's only one oil I endorse. PJ1."

Put today's lower octane gasoline in your bike and you can kiss your horsepower goodbye! To get performance back, add PJ1 Octane Plus to the gas every time you fill the tank. Octane Plus has point of ignition buffers, allowing you to raise the octane level of any pump gasoline with complete safety. You'll also appreciate the gas stabilizers in Octane Plus. They keep the gas in your tank from going stale when you're not riding and prevent gum and varnish build-up in the carburetors and fuel system.



Look, I carry a lot of names on my team bike and leathers, but there's only one that stands for lubrication. That's PJ1."



Kenny Roberts

Three time World Road Racing Champion, two time AMA National Champion and Special Consultant to PJ1 Corporation

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Voice From The Wilderness

Motorcycling II-B

Or not to be.

• At the risk of dating myself—didn't I begin the first episode of this soap opera on a similar note?—no matter: Unless you have access to carbon 14 technology, you couldn't place me from Pleistocene to plasti-scene anyway. But at whatever risk to reputation and credibility among this minute's minions of motorcycling, I'd like to dredge up a few relics of the not-too-distant past for your edification, amusement and perhaps enlightenment.

History, like a hack journalist, tends to repeat itself. Or so Indian Tom seemed to think. So one day he shows up at the door with an armload of the former. History, not repetition. As I mentioned in a previous installment, Tom is a study in economy of prose. He does not repeat himself.

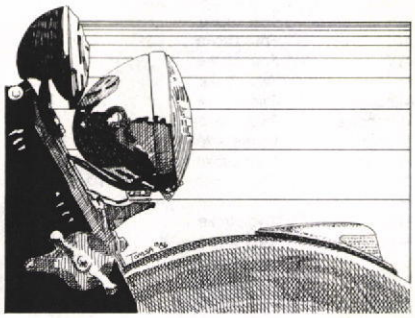
"I think you'll find a lot in here that's not much different from what one finds in today's journals," he said and left me with a lapful of motorcycle magazines bearing dates like July 1968. Only yesterday.

But Tom had overestimated me. Though my initial reaction was consistent with his thesis—July of '68 being the date of my current marriage and but a heartbeat away—closer inspection impressed me more with the perishability of motorcycling and media trends than with the timelessness Tom saw in them.

I fear I'm more of a trendy than I cared to confess, but I've grown accustomed and rather fond of today's full-color photo spreads; full-color, full-fairing, full-race street machinery; and full-color, full-coverage leathers, helmets and whatnots. Thumbing through the pages of 18-year-old magazines and, more pertinently, recognizing the names and faces therein as old friends and lovers makes a body feel old.

Maybe it's that unmistakable aroma of printed pages that have been hidden from the light of day for many moons. (inward 2 ½ mixed metaphor, degree of difficulty: 1.8) But instead of the *déjà vu* I was led to expect, I caught that rush of confusion you may remember from the last time you saw a newsreel from Dallas, Nov. 22, 1963. The JFK assassination. *Say, didn't I remember this in color? Jack's ruddy tan and Jackie's pink pillbox hat. What's with the sepia-tones?*

You children of the Gamma-era may wish to be excused; and Gramps, you might rather find somebody to join on the stoop and talk to the wind about county fairs and board tracks, but for the rest of



you: Welcome to the Middle Ages.

When every bike book on the stands had a bunch of short guys in short hair on the back cover, wearing high-water Bates leathers over the outside of their army surplus boots. Remember?

How about Hap Jones helmets? They still do make hats where a guy's face shows, but Hap's aren't among them. Oddly enough, the old pudding-bowl helmets from post-war Isle of Man reports look less goofy and antiquated than 3/4 Hap hats with flat shields on Harley racers circulating San Jose's horse track.

Here past and present, old and new, permanence and progress meet with maximum confusion. Flattracking still is the *sine qua non* of two-wheeled competition, but now the whole world knows it. Harley is still in there bellowing between the hairy legs of boys from Michigan, but now they have to share the winner's circle with howling Hondas.

Cosmetically, the major difference is that today's racer, whether Amurrican dirttracker or furrin roadracer, looks more svelte. 1968's leathers leaned toward horizontal stripes or two-piece suits with clashing pants and jackets. Definitely bad fashion sense, but giving our boys the broad-beamed, cornfed look of a Big Ten fullback. In Europe, everyone wore basic black for understated elegance. Today's Dr. Denton cowhides, color-coordinated and diagonally striped, are fashionable as April in Paris and make a boy look like Barishnikov, even with a steel shoe on his left foot.

But, as I think I mentioned in yet another column, this motorcycling business is about three basic things: Man (meaning humans of any gender), machine and macadam. Which translates in domestic English to pavement. If you can get beyond the fact that most of these hoary old periodicals depict the road in black and white rather than color, the road looks pretty much the same. And winding white-lined blacktop will always appear rather fetching to the eye of rider-in-heat.

Where I saw the most dramatic change—some progressive, some merely masturbatory—was in the machinery. The roll call of almost-gone-all-but-forgotten marques is enough to give one gray hair. When was the last time you salivated over an Ossa? Whither Wombat? What about the mighty motors of Royal Enfield? I had forgotten to remember that in my early adulthood, let alone youth, a 650cc Triumph was considered a big-bore bike.

Sound implausible? Then how many of you cut your teeth and abraded other portions of your anatomy on Suzuki X-6 Hustlers? In the mid-'60s, a 250 that could beat a 650 to 60 was a middleweight giant-killer. I had a friend with an 850 Matchless, and everybody whispered around that he actually had three (count 'em, three) balls. He did have a set of forearms like an Iowa dairyman. By today's standards, those epic duels between X-6s and Triumph Bonnevilles look more like midget wrestling.

Still there are similarities between then and now which even my rheumy eye can detect. It was on page 44 of the November issue of a certain publication that shares half of our name that I saw the first of the current wave of UJMs previewed. (Even UJM, your transverse four, Universal Japanese Motorcycle, is now an archaic usage, as well as an endangered species.) But this forerunner of today's industry standard beat the K-0 Honda 750 to the street by nearly two years. It did so by using two engines. Cheek-by-jowl Triumphs 650s, resulting in a 460-pound, 100-horse, 150-mph hyperscooter.

It all sounded so, so *'80s* I almost lost the point the writer was trying to pound through my skull: That this was the crotch-rocket of every go-faster's wettest dreams. When I finished the story on the twin transverse-tight Triumph and tossed the old mag aside, the cover blurb jolted me back from '60s fantasy to '80s reality.

"Honda's Biggest: The Devastating DOHC 450," it shrieked. If nothing else, motorcycling has gotten a hell of a lot louder in the last couple decades. Today that shriek would barely amount to a whisper.

—Jeff Smith

CYCLE GUIDE'S CYCLE GUIDE

Cycle Guide's catalog of recent test hardware—no brag, just fact

OFF-ROAD

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE	TYPE	ENGINE TYPE	WHEEL TRAVEL, IN. FRONT/REAR	WEIGHT, LBS.	RAKE/TRAIL, DEGREES/INCHES	GEARS
Cagiva WRX 250-'84	August '84	Enduro	Two-stroke	11.1/11.6	232	30.0/4.65	6
Honda ATC250R-'84	May '84	ATV	Two-stroke	8.8/8.C	311	N/A	5
Honda ATC350X-'85	September '85	ATV	Four-stroke	8.0/7.0	324	23.0/1.4	6
Honda FourTrax 4x4-'86	Nov./Dec. '85	ATV	Four-stroke	4.1/4.6	570	3.0/0.5	5
Honda CR125R-'84	April '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.2/12.3	195	27.2/4.29	6
Honda CR250R-'86	February '86	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.7/12.0	221	27.5/4.41	5
Honda CR500R-'85	February '85	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.6/12.3	232	27.5/4.41	5
Honda XR200R-'86	July '86	Enduro	Four-stroke	9.4/10.5	226	27.0/4.53	6
Honda XR250R-'86	July '86	Enduro	Four-stroke	10.4/11.0	250	26.5/4.33	6
Honda XR600R-'85	October '85	Desert	Four-stroke	10.9/11.4	284	28.0/4.65	5
Husqvarna 250WRX-'85	August '85	Enduro	Two-stroke	11.8/12.5	239	27.0/4.72	6
Husqvarna 430 Auto-'86	March '86	Enduro	Two-stroke	10.7/11.5	245	27.0/4.72	3
Husqvarna 500CR-'85	April '85	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.9/12.9	235	27.0/4.72	4
Husqvarna 510TE-'85	March '85	Enduro	Four-stroke	10.6/11.9	263	28.5/5.16	6
Kawasaki KDX200-'86	March '86	Enduro	Two-stroke	10.1/10.7	225	26.5/5.31	6
Kawasaki KX125-'86	January '86	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.2/12.6	201	27.5/4.57	6
Kawasaki KX250-'84	February '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.6/12.3	220	28.5/4.65	5
Kawasaki KXT250 Tecate-'84	May '84	ATV	Two-stroke	8.6/8.2	319	N/A	5
Kawasaki KLR600-'84	September '84	Dual-purpose	Four-stroke	9.2/8.3	322	29.5/4.80	5
KTM 500MX-'86	June '86	Motocross	Two-stroke	10.9/10.8	227	28.0/N/A	5
Suzuki Quadracer 250-'85	May '85	ATV	Two-stroke	7.2/8.1	326	N/A	5
Suzuki RM125-'85	May '85	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.4/11.8	202	29.0/4.84	6
Suzuki RM250-'84	February '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.8/12.9	220	27.8/4.41	5
Yamaha BW200-'85	April '85	Trail	Four-stroke	6.3/6.6	249	27.3/3.46	5
Yamaha IT200-'84	August '84	Enduro	Two-stroke	10.0/10.6	211	28.0/4.53	6
Yamaha TT350-'86	May '86	Trail	Four-stroke	10.4/9.3	261	27.5/4.53	6
Yamaha TT600-'85	October '85	Trail	Four-stroke	11.3/10.7	283	28.0/4.65	5
Yamaha TY350-'85	July '85	Trials	Two-stroke	6.5/4.8	193	23.0/1.93	6
Yamaha YZ125-'84	April '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.9/12.3	194	27.7/4.57	6
Yamaha YZ250-'86	April '86	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.7/12.0	225	28.0/4.69	5
Yamaha YZ490-'84	June '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.3/12.7	227	28.5/4.72	4

STREET

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE	ENGINE TYPE*	DISPLACEMENT, CC	QUARTER-MILE, SEC./MPH	TOP SPEED, MPH	WEIGHT, LBS.	FUEL CONSUMPTION, MPG	STOPPING DISTANCE FROM 60 MPH, FT.
BMW K75C-'86	June '86	3I/G	740.4	13.171/102.03	121	480	37–54	142
BMW K100-'86	March '86	4I/G	987.2	12.412/108.82	122	506	35–46	139
BMW K100RT-'86	May '86	4I/G	987.2	13.255/98.90	130	595	39–44	124
BMW R80-'85	September '85	2C/G	782.5	13.357/98.36	114	439	37–52	148
Cagiva Alazzurra 650 SS-'86	February '86	90 deg. 2D/F	649.6	12.982/99.18	113	432	34–49	135
H-D FLTC Tour Glide-'86	May '86	45 deg. 2D/H	1337.7	14.378/90.00	107	748	39–48	141
H-D FXRS Low Rider Sport-'86	Nov./Dec. '85	45 deg. 2D/F	1337.7	13.654/96.25	115	592	31–50	132
H-D FXRT Sport Glide-'85	October '84	45 deg. 2D/H	1337.7	14.180/90.36	92	640	28–51	126
H-D XLH 883 Sportster-'86	September '85	45 deg. 2D/F	882.9	14.045/92.40	106	467	37–67	131
Honda Gold Wing Aspencade -'86	May '86	4C/G	1181.9	13.590/96.56	114	761	32–48	120
Honda Gold Wing Ltd Ed.-'85	March '85	4C/G	1181.9	13.346/98.36	113	810	37–45	134
Honda NS250R-'85	May '85	90 deg. 2D/F††	249.3	13.091/101.58	121	339	27–38	135
Honda NS400R-'85	October '85	90 deg. 3D/F††	387.4	12.324/108.69	125	392	25–45	135
Honda VF500F Interceptor-'84	July '84	90 deg. 4D/F	497.6	12.484/106.00	126	419	33–48	123
Honda VF700C Magna-'85	August '85	90 deg. 4D/G	698.9	12.390/108.82	128	520	34–47	131
Honda VFR750F Interceptor-'86	June '86	90 deg. 4D/F	748.1	11.407/120.48	144	476	33–55	128
Honda VF1000R-'85	July '85	90 deg. 4D/F	998.4	11.308/121.78	149	578	20–42	135
Honda VT1100C Shadow-'85	June '85	45 deg. 2D/G	1099.2	13.022/100.33	112	560	33–44	127
Honda V65 Magna-'85	February '85	90 deg. 4D/G	1098.0	11.440/118.42	142	566	34–46	133
Kawasaki 454 LTD-'85	September '85	2A/H	454.1	13.386/97.08	102	427	37–53	125
Kawasaki GPz750 turbo-'85	Nov./Dec. '85	4A/F	739.0	11.441/118.89	141	532	40–54	135
Kawasaki Eliminator-'85	April '85	4A/G	908.2	11.405/117.49	134	569	22–41	131
Kawasaki Ninja 600R-'85	March '85	4A/F	592.6	12.124/109.09	135	448	40–48	135
Kawasaki Ninja-'85	August '85	4A/F	908.2	11.175/123.79	151	535	32–41	131
Kawasaki Ninja 1000R-'86	January '86	4A/F	997.8	10.994/125.69	162	564	33–44	118
Kawasaki Voyager-'86	May '86	6A/G	1286.1	13.240/99.44	119	878	32–39	142
Kawasaki Voyager XII-'86	July '86	4A/G	1196.5	13.015/101.01	125	732	30–46	126
Suzuki GS550ES-'85	May '85	4A/F	572.3	12.551/106.50	119	447	33–48	133
Suzuki GSX-R750-'86	April '86	4A/F	749.7	11.566/116.42	142	437	30–47	136
Suzuki GS1150E-'85	June '85	4A/F	1135.4	11.032/121.78	146	529	30–55	138
Suzuki GV700GL Madura-'85	Nov./Dec. '84	82 deg. 4D/G	698.5	13.307/102.15	111	546	23–45	143
Suzuki GV1200GL Madura-'85	February '85	82 deg. 4D/G	1165.9	11.364/117.18	140	576	28–45	131
Suzuki GV1400GD Cavalcade LX-'86	May '86	82 deg. 4D/G	1360.4	12.881/101.12	115	806	32–43	155
Suzuki RG500 Gamma-'85	October '85	Square-Four/F††	498.5	11.991/113.20	N/A	374	22–42	134
Suzuki VS700GLF Intruder-'85	July '85	2D/G	699.7	12.998/101.01	112	442	44–63	132
Yamaha FJ1200-'86	July '86	4A/F	1188.4	10.851/127.47	147	539	32–43	132
Yamaha FZ750-'86	March '86	45 deg. 4A/F	749.6	11.383/118.26	145	494	37–45	127
Yamaha RZV500R-'84	October '85	4D/F††	499.7	12.409/107.52	134	422	25–53	147
Yamaha Venture Royale-'86	May '86	70 deg. 4D/G	1294.0	12.998/101.01	136†	784	39–44	130
Yamaha V-Max-'85	May '85	70 deg. 4D/G	1197.6	10.922/127.47	151	596	23–32	137
Yamaha XV700 Virago-'86	March '86	75 deg. 2D/G	699.2	13.686/96.46	104†	489	39–48	130
Yamaha XV1000 Virago-'85	October '85	75 deg. 2D/G	981.0	12.993/101.59	111	507	33–47	132

*__A__-Transverse, __B__-Vertical (single-cylinder only), __C__-Horizontally Opposed, __D__-Tandem Vee, __E__-Transverse Vee, __F__-Chain Final Drive, __G__-Shaft Final Drive, __H__-Belt Final Drive, __I__-Horizontal Longitudinal; † indicates a calculated top speed; †† indicates a two-stroke engine

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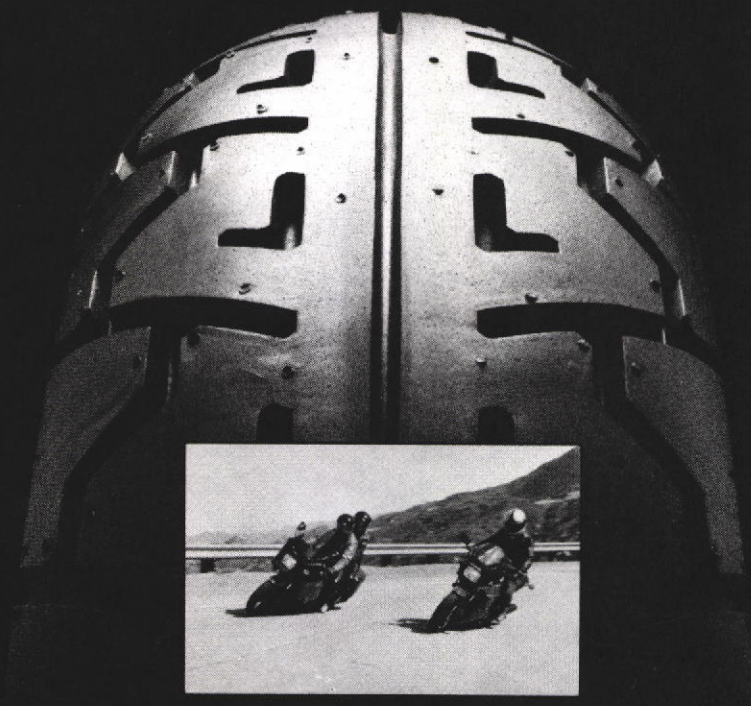
GO THE DISTANCE.



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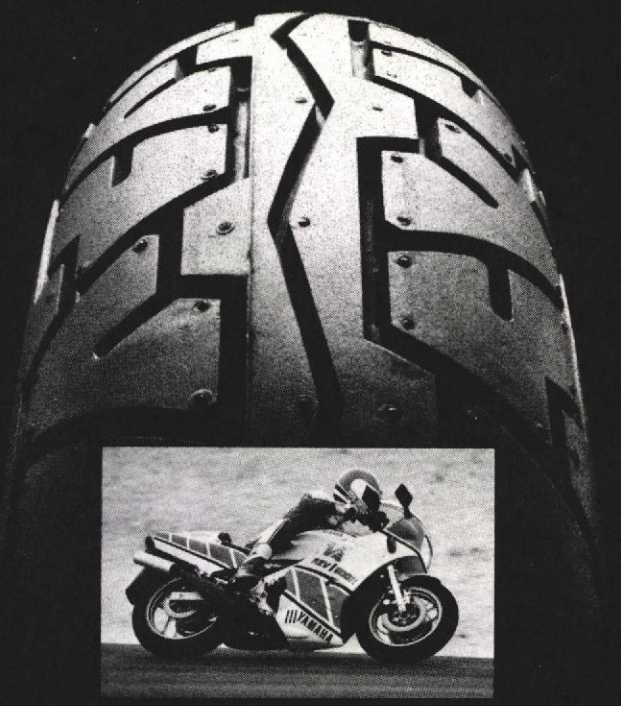
REAR; 140/90 H 15 T/L RWL; 150/90 H 15 T/L RWL; 120/90 H 16 T/L BW; 130/90 H 16 T/L BW and RWL; 110/90 H 17 T/L BW; 130/90 H 17 T/L BW and RWL; 110/80 H 18 T/L BW; 110/90 H 18 T/L BW; 120/90 H 18 T/L BW; 130/90 H 18 T/L BW and RWL

GO THE DISTANCE FASTER.



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LETTERS *Cover girls, distaff denials and Lake Milwaukee.*

BLONDE AMBITION

I just read your April 1986 issue with the Kawasaki Triples Retrospect. I'm the proud owner of a 1972 500 which I bought wrecked, later restored and which has spent the last seven years in a friend's chicken coop. The part of the article that caught my eye was in the opening paragraph, which mentioned the blonde in the Norton ads. Yes, I'm old enough to remember her, and I've even gotten a letter from her.

I was a confirmed Norton freak ever since I spotted her in the January 1972 CYCLE GUIDE. Several years ago I sent out a plea in the newsletter of the United States Norton Owners Association requesting anyone with copies of the various ads to send me some. I got quite a few and decided there were enough people who remembered her that I'd try to find her.

Through the head office of Norton motorcycles in London, I located her and sent her a letter. She wrote back—in German. It turns out she's Austrian and speaks little English. She's also married and has a 14-year-old daughter.

I never did find out if she had a younger sister.

Lt. Burt Upchurch
USS Harold E. Holt
About 1000 miles north of Hawaii

PROVINCIAL OUTLOOK

In your April issue, Daniel Provincial called himself "one of probably hundreds of readers . . . who think that . . . motorcycles and accessories are somewhat boring unless there are beautiful women on or around them." I'd like to remind Mr. Provincial, the CYCLE GUIDE staff and other readers that women not only decorate motorcycles, they also ride motorcycles, read motorcycle magazines and attend racing events.

I wish Mr. Provincial could, for just one day, be a woman at the races in Laconia, New Hampshire. Then maybe he'd understand how harmful it is to continually portray women as accessories rather than as human beings.

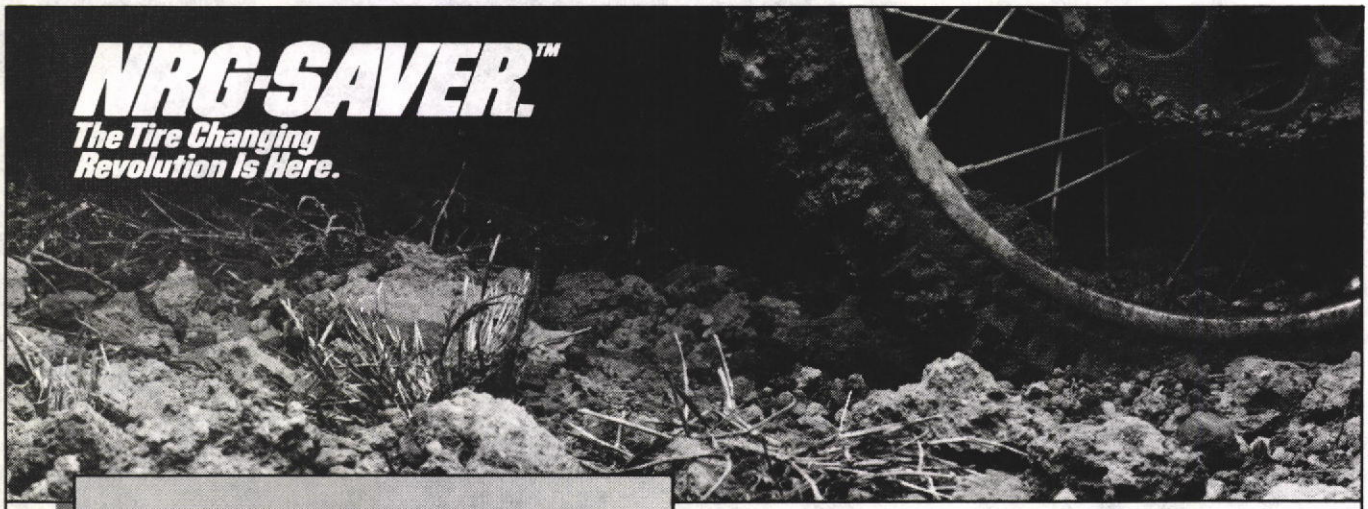
Sally Whipple
Newington, Connecticut

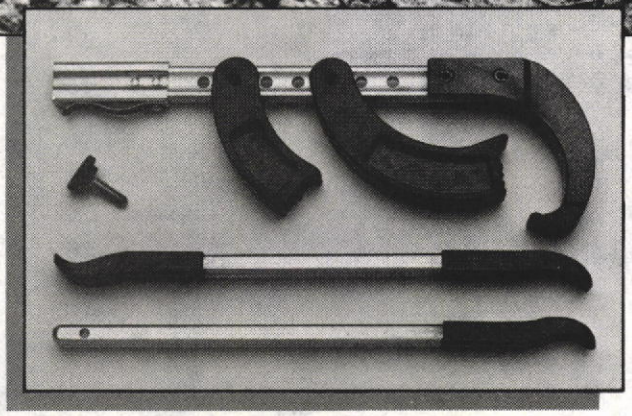
From what we've seen, it can be harmful to be near *some sections at Laconia—ed.*

SHOWERING PRAISE

Twice now you've tested the Harley FLT and failed to come up with the worst "nit" of all. The fairing fills up with rain due to the el cheapo design of the fairing pocket lids. My FLT is parked outside and always has a gallon of water in it (no kidding) after it rains.

Randal Montgomery
Victoria, British Columbia
Canada





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VOICE FROM LEFT FIELD

Jeff Smith's March 1986 "Voice from the Wilderness" column displays an unusual amount of motorcycle foolishness. First, complexity is a relative term. In the eyes of a 19th century horseman, the Ducati Smith loves would seem overly complex and all too limited in its function.

Second, his evidence to support the claim of unneeded complexity is fundamentally incorrect. Smith states that all that complexity is hardly a gain for only 20 miles per hour more top speed and about one or two seconds a lap. In fact, even the latest 750cc Ducati is 45 mph behind a Ninja 1000 and 35 mph behind the FZ750. In my club racing experience I have yet to see a stock Ducati run within 15 seconds of a modern box-stock sportbike.

Finally, Smith's basic philosophy of riding is inadequate. Motorcycling is *not* "about getting down the road, around the corner and to a halt." That's why people buy Volkswagen Beetles. Motorcycling is about *fun*.

Jack Carberry
Merrick, New York

That's what he was talking about, too. As to your appraisal of them, you've apparently never seen a Ducati twin—ed.

SURVEY SAYS...

Jeff Smith and Jerry Smith—are they related? Their opposing columns on complexity in motorcycling sound like the kind of arguments my father and I have. Dad will, to the day he dies, swear by his Velocette, and I'll swear by my RZ350. And every time, I end the argument by challenging him to a few laps on Sligo Creek Parkway, Washington, D.C.'s version of "the canyons."

Pvt. Eric S. Balderston
APO New York

Between an RZ350 and a Velocette, we'd be hard pressed to figure which is more complex, though—ed.

BIKES AND BUCKS

I've just finished reading your group test of the latest touring bikes in the May issue and I have a complaint. Why can't you provide maintenance costs for the machines under evaluation? Exactly how much money must be spent to keep the bike under warranty and in working order? I'll bet adjusting the valves on the Kawasaki and Yamaha amounts to a tidy sum.

Manufacturers deliver their latest pristine steeds to your doorstep for testing. Surely you can find a way to let us know what to expect when we hand our

Continued

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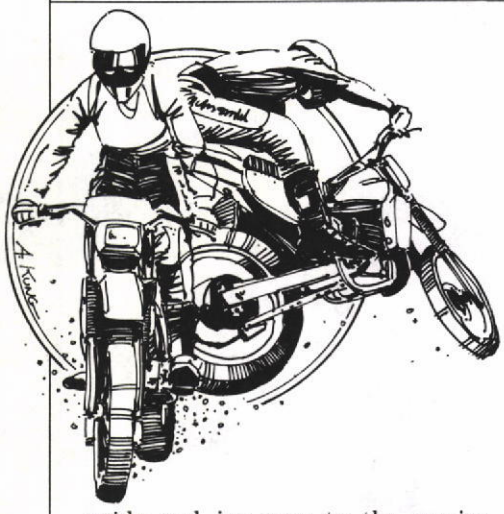

pride and joy over to the service department.

Glenn Garrett
Montrose, California

CLOSE, BUT NO CIGAR

I'd like to compliment you on one of the most objective magazines I've ever read. I'm relatively new to sportbike riding—about three years—and since then I think I've checked out just about every sportbike made since then.

But I've never seen Harley-Davidson come out with a sportbike. I'd appreciate it if you could tell me if H-D has (and I just missed it) or, failing that, why they never have.

Dave "Speedster" DeSilva
Vallejo, California

Harley built the XLCR Cafe Racer in 1977, but apparently H-D customers preferred Sportsters, not sportbikes—ed.

WHAT'S ALL THIS, THEN?

I'm amazed by all the bickering between Harley people and "the rest." I moved here recently from England where motorbikes are looked on as transportation, not toys, and all are appreciated for what they are. Few English riders are bothered much by what country their bikes are made in, and rightly so. Please, let's get a few things straight:

First, the traditional English bike has a certain something about it that appeals to many people. Second, Harleys probably have something similar to the above that appeals to different people. And third, Japanese bikes are the fastest, lightest, most economical machines available for the money.

If you want something that sounds and feels like a Harley, then buy it. If you want a cheap machine for commuting two miles up the road, fine—get one. But don't be rude to those who disagree with your choice of machinery.

Face it, people, we're all on two wheels, and if your reasons for being there differ, so what? Enjoy what you choose to ride and leave everyone else alone to do their thing.

Steve Baker
Westport, Massachusetts

All letters must include the writer's name and address. Letters will be edited for length. Due to the volume of mail received, we regret we are unable to give personal responses.

Questions or comments? You can talk with the CYCLE GUIDE staff by calling (213) 328-5700. Phones will be answered Monday through Friday, 9 a.m.—5 p.m., Pacific Standard Time.

GOOD.

Marzocchi's new A84 shocks offer premium performance at a reasonable price. New chrome body and black spring. Features include heavy 12mm damper rod, larger piston and washer pack for increased progressivity and dampening sensitivity, new low friction oil seals, double acting foot valve, and 5 position preload adjuster. Complete with springs and lifetime, limited warranty. Available for most popular twin shock bikes.
$99 PR.

BETTER.

Marzocchi Strada gas shocks are the most popular replacement shock on the market. Features include an aluminum alloy, slim profile body with heavy duty 12mm center shaft. Total separation of gas and oil positively eliminates emulsification, the major cause of suspension fade. Other features include a five position preload adjuster, a double valving system, and Marzocchi's unique modular dampening valve. Complete with springs and a lifetime, limited warranty. Available for most popular twin shock bikes.
$139 PR.

BEST.

New Marzocchi Symbol shocks, the most advanced gas shock you can buy. Symbol shocks feature externally adjustable, four position rebound dampening and a five step preload adjuster. Separate gas and oil systems positively eliminate fade. New oversize piston and washers; new low friction seals. Chrome body with black spring. Complete with springs and backed by Marzocchi's lifetime, limited warranty. Available for most twin shock bikes. The ultimate replacement shock.
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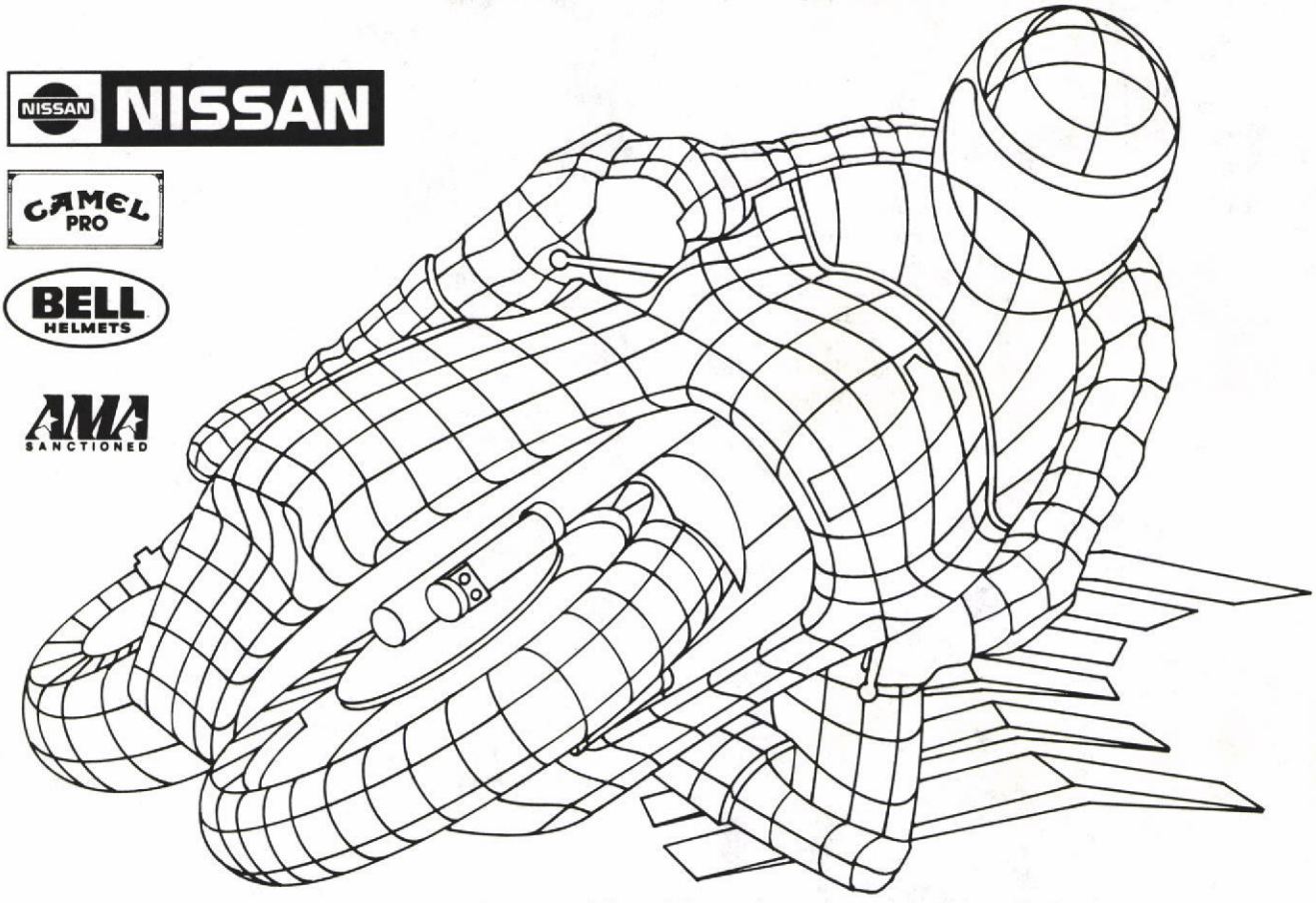


THE NISSAN 200

July 12 and 13, 1986

Laguna Seca Raceway, Monterey, CA

A Camel Pro Series National Championship • The Bell Superbike Classic On Saturday

THE MEN:

The Nissan 200 has been the showcase for the talents of both the best riders in the United States and the best Americans competing in Europe and we expect 1986 to be no different. Past events have seen appearances by Kenny Roberts, Randy Mamola, Freddie Spencer, Eddie Lawson, Wayne Rainey, Mike Baldwin and many more. To the man, they like the challenge of the Laguna Seca Circuit. And the competition between them has become legendary.

THE MACHINES:

The Formula One machines featured in the Nissan 200 are 350 pounds of fury, capable of speeds of 140 miles per hour here and producing horsepower of such magnitude that brutal acceleration and spine-chiling wheelies, even off the top of the world famous down hill "corkscrew," become commonplace all around the circuit and all the way from green to checkered flag.

THE CIRCUIT:

Situated on the beautiful Monterey Peninsula, Laguna Seca Raceway is a riders' course. The proximity of the crowd, and its size, to the 1.9-mile layout gives the riders and fans the feeling of a European setting. The seven left and two right turns, coupled with rolling hills, offer a true challenge for the riders and incredible excitement for the spectators.

THE EVENT:

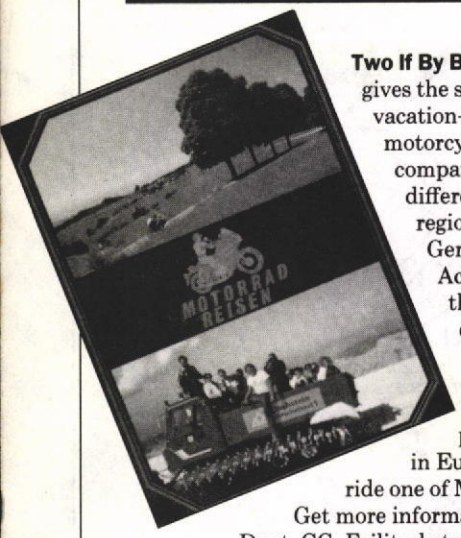
The Nissan 200 at Laguna Seca Raceway is rated by many as the premier motorcycle road race in the United States today. You should be making your plans now to attend the Nissan 200 July 12 and 13, 1986. The 3rd Bell Superbike Classic will be featured Saturday. Don't forget the fun of camping at the circuit, or pamper yourself by staying at one of the many fine hotels, motels and inns on the Monterey Peninsula.

INFO:

Ticket information is available now from the Laguna Seca Office. Write us at P.O. Box SCRAMP, Monterey, CA 93942, or call between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. weekdays (408) 373-1811.

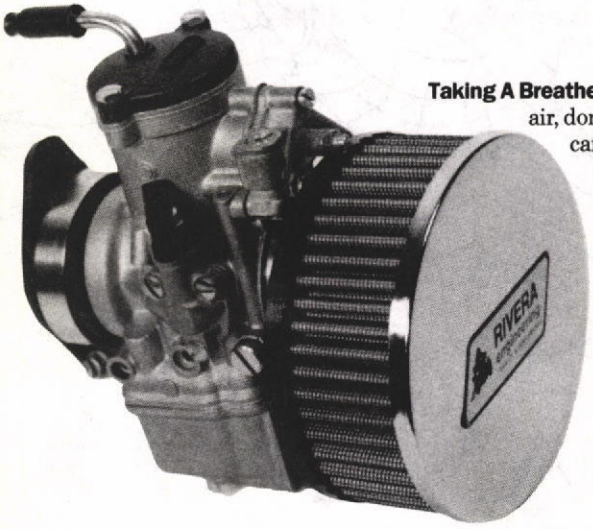
— Nissan is the Official Car and Truck of Laguna Seca Raceway —

Motomart *Taking liberties with the buyer's constitutional.*



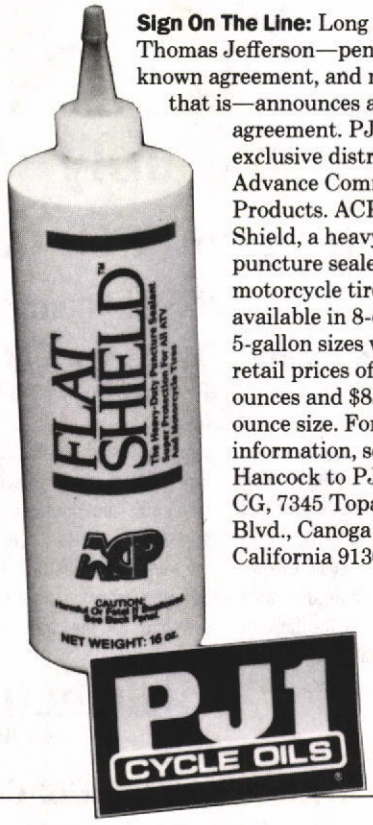
Two If By Bike: Motorrad Reisen gives the signal for a revolutionary vacation—touring Europe via motorcycle. The Munich-based company offers several different tours through regions of Austria, Italy, Germany and France. Accommodations along the way and the length of each tour vary, and the tours cost from about $515 up to $2175. You can bring your own bike, purchase a BMW for pick-up in Europe and shipment home or ride one of Motorrad's Hondas or BMWs. Get more information from Motorrad Reisen, Dept. CG, Feilitzchstraβe 1, P.O.B. 440118, D-8000 Munich 40, West Germany.

Focal-Eyes: Dirtriders need good visibility, as much as the minutemen who kept an eye out for redcoats. If those riders wear glasses, though, they often rely blindly on their goggles. Oakley clears that up with L frame goggles, made with inside cutaways to fit over glasses. L frames also feature a higher nose bridge, thick inside foam padding and a deep undereye drop. The goggles come in white, gray, yellow, red, blue or black for a suggested retail price of $26.95. To see more, contact your local dealer or Rocky Cycle Co. Inc., Dept. CG, P.O. Box 1431, Sunnyvale, California 94088.



Taking A Breather: If your Harley-Davidson's performance has disappeared into thin air, don't revolt; use common sense. Consider the Dell 'Orto Pumper carburetor kit from Rivera Engineering. The Pumper uses a coupler that the company claims bolts directly to the stock manifold. The kit comes with either the Breather air cleaner or the K&N type, cable, both throttle grips, hardware and jetting kit. Rivera claims a performance increase of up to 15 percent with the Pumper, which has a $169.95 suggested retail price for the 38mm size or $174.95 for the 40mm size. More information is available from Rivera Engineering, Dept. CG, 6416 S. Western Ave., Whittier, California 90606.

Wise Up: Ben Franklin believed early to bed and early to rise was the secret of staying ahead, but Wiseco offers a more modern way. The FZ750 Road Race Big Bore Piston Kit features pistons forged from a high silicon/aluminum alloy. The 12:1 compression ratio, claims Wiseco, helps extract the best performance from your FZ, too. The kit carries a suggested retail price of $378, and includes rings, wrist pins and circlips in the standard 68mm bore size, or 68.5mm or 69mm sizes. Get ahead; contact Wiseco Piston Inc., Dept. CG, 7201 Industrial Park Blvd., Mentor, Ohio 44060.



Sign On The Line: Long ago, TJ—Thomas Jefferson—penned a well-known agreement, and now PJ—PJ1, that is—announces another agreement. PJ1 Corp. is the exclusive distributor for Advance Commercial Products. ACP makes Flat Shield, a heavy-duty tire puncture sealer for ATV and motorcycle tires. It's available in 8-ounce to 5-gallon sizes with suggested retail prices of $4.95 for 16 ounces and $8.99 for the 32-ounce size. For more information, send your John Hancock to PJ1 Corp., Dept. CG, 7345 Topanga Canyon Blvd., Canoga Park, California 91303.

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NAVA

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Jay Gleason was heating up the staging area with a propane torch, using the hissing, searing-hot flame to heat the thick coating of rubber on the track surface and sweat the alcohol out of countless applications of VHT traction compound laid down over the years. By the time he was done, walking across the hot, gummy patch of rubber-coated asphalt in the tower lane at Baylands Raceway in Fremont, California, was like strolling on Velcro. If you stood in one place too long, your shoes stuck to the track.

Gleason's thoroughness, along with his speed, consistency and uncanny feel for traction, were practically the only known quantities as the curtain went up on the first act of this year's Quickest and Fastest competition. If previous experience was any indication, everything else would be a crapshoot. In last year's dragstrip dogfight, for example, Suzuki's plain-jane GS1150E smoked Yamaha's V-Max and its sporting opposition with a blazing 10.430-second quarter-mile, 0.18 second faster than its nearest rival. And the smallest bike in the field, the 900 Ninja, sped away with top

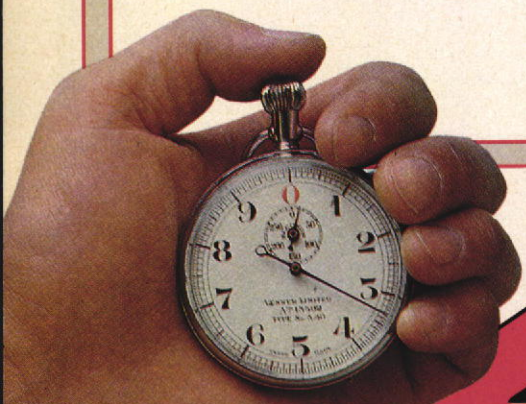
Continued

TWO-WHEEL WARGAMES:

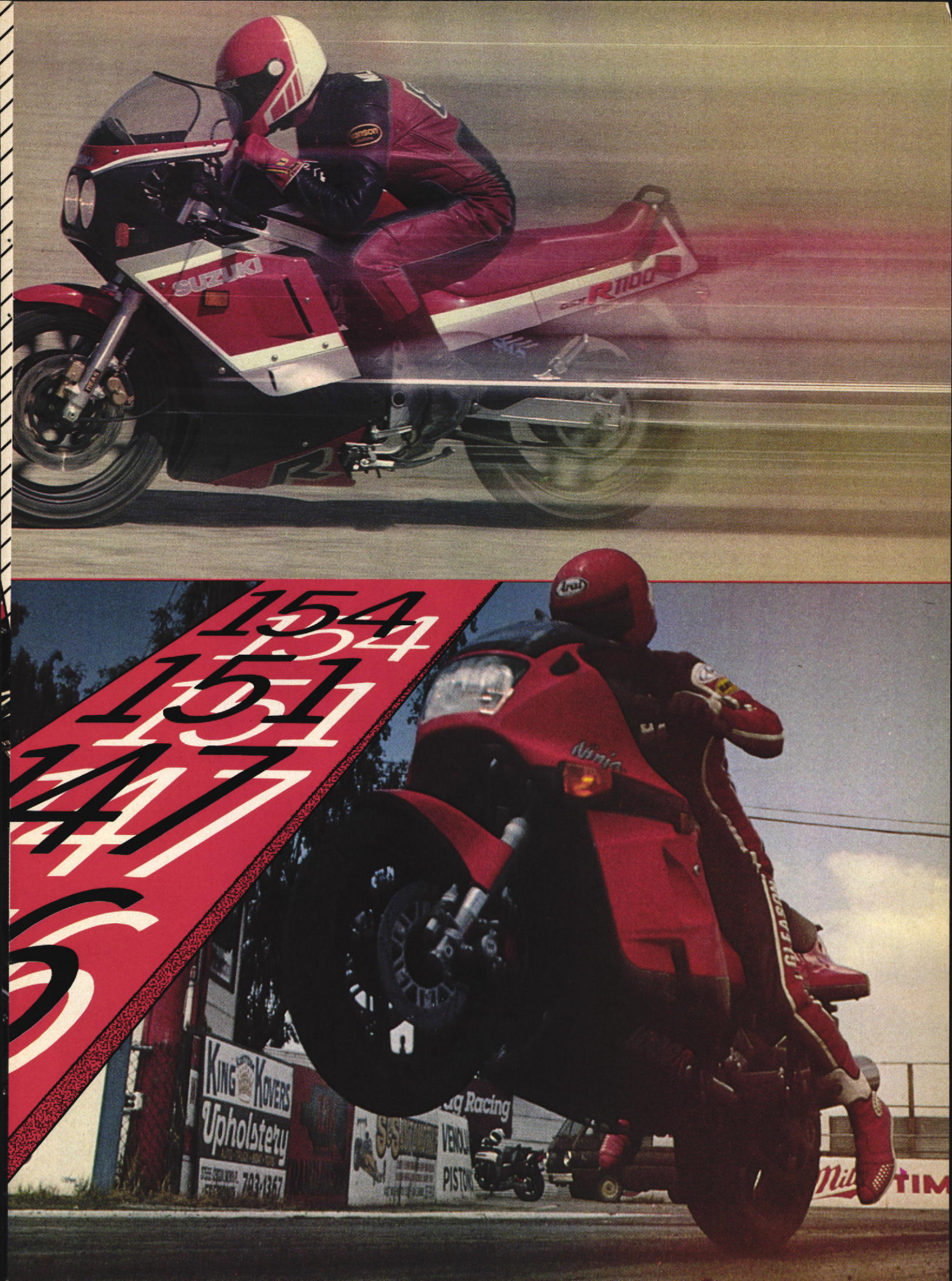
Quickest & Fastest ROUND IV

BY JERRY SMITH

Only the strong survive: Kawasaki 900 Ninja, Kawasaki Ninja 1000R, Suzuki GSX-R1100, Yamaha FJ1200, Yamaha V-Max



140 MPH


SUZUKI
R1100
154
151
147
Ninja
KING KOVERS
Upholstery
Racing

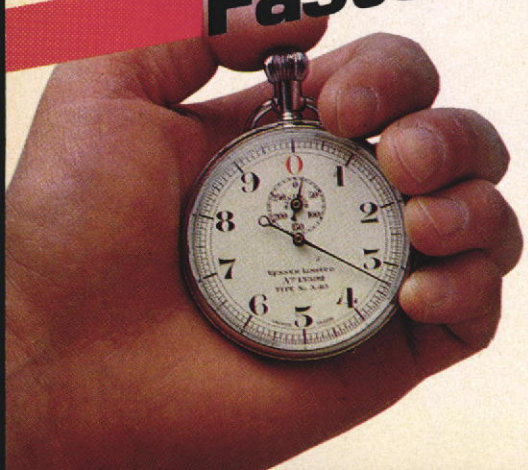
speed honors, tripping the lights at 151.25 mph and showing its heels to bikes with up to 300cc more displacement.

So as we lined up the combatants for this year's showdown, we couldn't help but speculate on the outcome. But we didn't have to wonder about Honda's entry—that company declined to participate in this year's slugfest, and judging by the VF1000R's showing last year, that was a wise decision: The VF-R's best 1985 quarter-mile time would have earned it last place this year, and its top speed no better than a mid-pack finish. Kawasaki signed up its 900 Ninja for a return bout, though, and sent its big brother, the 1000R, to help out, too. We wondered if the 900 could equal last year's top speed this time around, and by how much that mark would be surpassed by the Ninja 1000R, which had previously pegged our radar gun at an astonishing 162 mph.

We weren't sure how much improvement to expect in the two Yamahas. Both the V-Max, last year's overall winner, and the FJ1200 were little changed for 1986, except for the FJ's 91cc displacement increase over the FJ1100. And finally there was the GSX-R1100, sent into battle by Suzuki in place of last year's quarter-mile king, the sold-out GS1150E. Our only previous experience with the wild-card GSX-R consisted of hot-lapping it around Laguna Seca, but based on the impressions gathered there, the bike would be anything but an underdog in the battle for supremacy in the street.

To decide that title, these five bikes first vied for the quarter-mile crown at Baylands, and in order to squeeze the last ounce of quick from each at the dragstrip, we called on Jay Gleason to pull the wires. When it comes to low ETs, no one we know can equal Gleason, and with the track finally prepped to his liking that

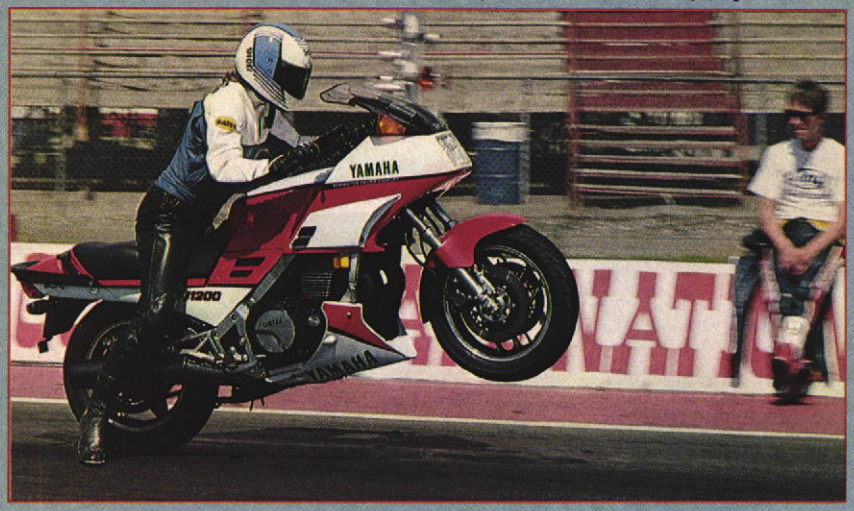
Quickest & Fastest



Our man under the lights

• When it comes to wringing the last eyeblink of speed out of a motorcycle, nobody's going to dispute Jay Gleason's abilities. As a dragstrip tester, Jay combines a rattlesnake's reflexes, a 135-pound curb weight and Methuselah's experience. By his own count, Jay Gleason's made more than 3000 dragstrip runs since he started pulling the trigger on hyperactive two-wheelers. That's more than any 10 average motorcyclists and considerably more than the typical magazine tester.

In the case of Mike Gillies, CYCLE GUIDE's resident dragstripper, that's about 2800 more passes. Still, he has managed to accrue enough holeshots from a truncated motocross career (ended by an exploded left knee) to get closer to Gleason's performance than any other magazine tester. During last year's quest for speed, MG came within 0.13 second of Jay's best on the 900 Ninja, a performance that left us wondering about Gillies' ability. In the months following, he managed to rack up some impressive numbers. In fact, his actual times on a number of test bikes, including *all* of the current Japanese 750s, are better than those posted by any other magazine tester.

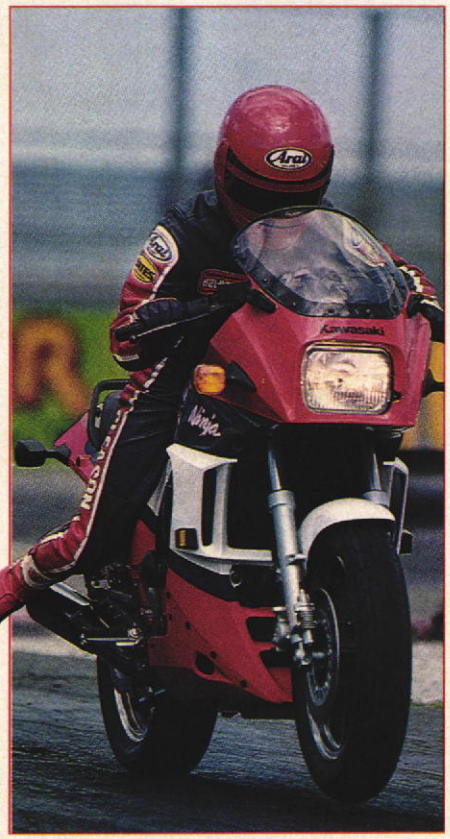


Our curiosity got the best of us this year, so when it came time for our annual trek up to Baylands, we zipped Gillies into his leathers and packed him off in the van with the rest of this year's crop of high-performance hardware. We weren't disappointed. In the '86 edition of the Fremont slugfest, our man MG managed to get within 0.1 second of Gleason's best time on the Kawasaki Ninja 1000R (10.750 sec./128.05 mph, compared to Gleason's 10.657 sec./128.38 mph). In any case, that's more than 0.13 second faster than any other moto-journalist has posted on that bike. We were pleased.

The capper came when Mike clambered aboard the GSX-R1100. After a number of wheelie-fouled false starts, Gillies reeled off a streak of 10.7-second runs until he finally horsed the bike through the Chrondeks at 10.648 seconds, 129.49 mph—real time, uncorrected, no excuses, projected bests or other fudge factors. That's the fastest time on a stock motorcycle ever recorded by a magazine staffer—period. Sorry, Jeff. —*Jim Miller*

day at Baylands, he came to the line with a smoking burnout and staged the V-Max. Earlier, at breakfast, Gleason warned us not to expect too much from his morning runs. "I always go faster after lunch," he said. Last year the V-Max blazed through the lights in 10.610 seconds at 128.20 mph. This time around Gleason's first run on the V-Max was good for a 10.62-second ET. Jay then lined up for a second run, and a few heartbeats later he hustled the snarling V-Max through the traps in 10.500 seconds at 128.20 mph, shaving 0.11 second off his best time last year on the V-Max, while posting an identical trap speed. The 10.500 pass turned out to be the V-Max's best, despite Gleason's attempts to better it after lunch. From where we stood, it looked like Gleason's breakfast—scrambled eggs, hash browns, bacon, hot tea and a filtered Kool—was all the fast food he needed.

Next Gleason worked his magic on the 900 Ninja. Part of Gleason's launch technique consists of holding engine rpm at a constant level while the lights blink down to green. That level isn't as high as you might think, because he's looking for torque and traction off the line, not horsepower and wheelspin. When the light turns green Gleason simultaneously feathers the clutch and opens up the throttle in one swift, fluid motion. One second he's there, the next he's gone—and so was the Ninja's clutch, after a 10.79-second pass, a little less than 0.04 second slower than its best time last year.



Gleason launches 1985 Top Speed King

The times—and speeds—are a-changin'.

While the 900 was wheeled back to the pits for a fresh clutch, Gleason warmed up the Ninja 1000R for its debut in our Quickest and Fastest competition. To combat the 564-pound Ninja's tendency to wheelie, Gleason came off the line at a lower engine rpm with each successive run; his times dropped correspondingly from 10.78 to 10.75 to 10.69. Gleason finally settled for a 10.67—until after lunch—and served himself a helping of FJ1200.

As an 1100 last year, the FJ turned a low ET of 10.781. This would be Gleason's first ride aboard an FJ1200, and his initial pass was a 10.82. "Boy, this thing is strong," said Gleason, adding that with less air in the rear tire it could go quicker. We obliged, and so did the FJ, with a 10.57, followed by its best time, a 10.539 at 128.02 mph.

The only bike left was the GSX-R1100, and Gleason needed just one run to post the bike's best time of the day—10.500, identical to that of the V-Max to the thousandth of a second. But the Suzuki hus-

Continued

tled through the speed traps at the end of the strip marginally faster than the Yamaha, topping out at 130.81 mph. During subsequent runs, even coming off the line with the GSX-R's engine at less than 3000 rpm—too low to register on the tach—the big Suzuki was quick to wheelie, and Jay's first run on the Suzuki stood as his best.

After lunch—mystery-meat cheeseburgers and cold pizza—Gleason took another shot at the Ninja 1000R. On the way back to the staging area after his second run, he saw his time—10.657 at 128.38 mph, the big Ninja's best—stood on the footpegs, thrust his fist skyward and said "Lunchtime!" The 900 Ninja, having already had lunch—a basket of fried clutch plates, since replaced—went its fastest the second time around, too—10.729 seconds at 127.65 mph.

The Ninja's final run marked the end of the day's official testing at Baylands, and several CG staffers took the opportunity to make a few unofficial runs. These runs proved that Jay Gleason is not only fast and consistent, but easy on machinery as well. After making nearly a hundred passes on five bikes, Gleason's only casualty was the 900 Ninja's clutch. After just one 11.55-second run at the hands of a CG staffer, the V-Max's clutch was little more than a memory.

Fortunately for the V-Max, other staffers got the nod to ride during top speed testing a week later, and the Yamaha breathed a sigh of relief. But those same staffers became more anxious that day as the sun rose higher over El Mirage and the chilly desert morning air warmed up. The lake bed was especially rough this year; Jack Dolan, of the Southern California Timing Association, was having difficulty finding a stretch long enough or smooth enough to set up a course; and the hotter it got, the slower we feared the bikes would run. We eventually settled for a layout with a noticeable bend between the lead-in area and the timing lights, necessitating a wide right turn midway through the course. It was far enough away from the lights to not affect top speeds, and from the end near the lights, the bend seemed otherwise fairly harmless. But it was another story entirely when viewed from the saddle, as Mike Gillies discovered later when the V-Max broke loose on a broken-up patch at over 140 mph and the rear tire tried to beat the front wheel through the traps. Taking a different line avoided the loose surface, but it was somewhat disconcerting.

As soon as Dolan gave us the go-ahead, Gillies and Jim Miller began putting the five bikes through their paces, clicking off runs as fast as they could speed through the lights and return to the starting area, a mile and a quarter away. The Ninja 1000R repeatedly lost power just before the second set of lights until Miller, suspecting fuel starvation, popped open the gas cap and taped a rag over the opening for better venting. This solved the problem just long enough for Gillies to wring a high of 154.10 mph out of the bike before the problem resurfaced, preventing any further runs.

Compared to last year's bike, this year's 900 Ninja had only one problem—it was almost 5 mph slower. Feeling exceptionally stable at speed and pulling redline in sixth gear, the 900 managed to stop Dolan's clocks at no better than

Continued

Shaving Tenths

A good rider helps, but . . .

• It's called the setup. Its purpose is to help a rider clock his best possible 1/4-mile time with a given streetbike. That takes more than a fresh set of plugs, a nearly empty tank and a cool morning. It takes a motorcycle that's been specifically dialed-in for the job of the day. And that job isn't street work—it's dragracing.

First off, you have to understand that a bike adjusted for the strip would be a deathtrap on the street. No rider in his right mind would venture one foot into traffic with a bike optimized to shave tenths. But between the start light and finish line of a 1/4-mile, the setup is the only way to go.

The changes from the showroom aren't many, and they aren't drastic. There aren't many that *can* be made and keep the bike mechanically stock. Basically we're talking about altering the suspension settings, tire pressures and ride height. That's it. Jay Gleason, the acknowledged master at this sort of thing, concurs. "It's always more of a war with myself than with the bike," he says. Meaning that the rider is really the determining factor, and anything that makes the bike easier to launch deserves attention. Consequently, faced with a row of bikes to test, Gleason will go down the line calling for tweaks to each.

Front tires go to 40, sometimes 50 psi. The rears get dropped way down: to 24 psi for a bike like the Suzuki 1150, 18 if it's a V-Max. The suspension systems are then sacked out, to get the bike as low as possible. With its nose and tail hugging pavement, the inevitable wheelie is then easier to control. Further on down the track, that lowered bike won't pogo with every gear change, either. It'll keep its head down and charge, like a runner leaning for the tape.

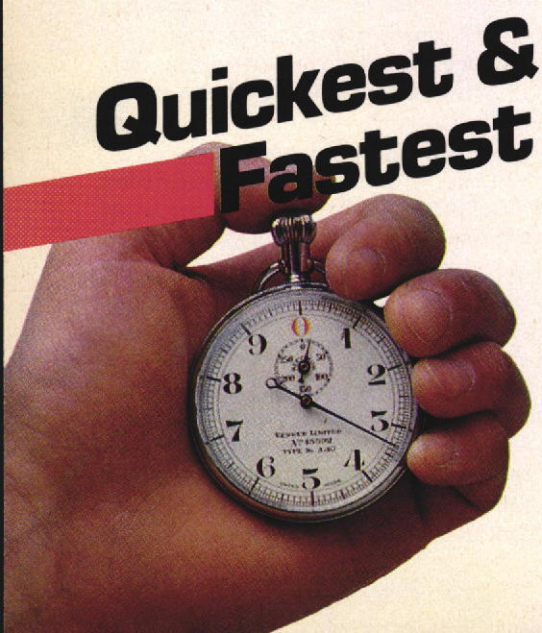
The actual adjustments made to get this low-down stance vary. If there's any suspension air to be let out, that's the first to go. Next, preload adjustments are backed off all the way, even to the point where the collars are off the shock threads. Like we said, a drag-only setup is a rolling disaster on the street.

This last recommendation isn't ironclad, though. Gleason notes that some big-bore, shaft-drive bikes—specifically Yamaha's V-Max and Honda's V65 Magna—work best with rear preload set full-stiff to minimize suspension travel during hard acceleration.

Then the fork. The ideal drag-day unit has zero preload with heavy rebound damping. If the bike has hydraulic anti-dive, that's put at maximum stiff. An elusive tenth might be found by dropping the triple-clamp lower on the tubes. It's a change that's easily made, works and the bike is still technically stock. If there are clip-ons, sometimes these are swung in to get the rider's hands and elbows out of the airstream. Gleason says this is probably unnecessary, though, labeling it overkill. It might look fast, but it really isn't. It makes the bike harder to ride, too. And with a street motorcycle at the dragstrip, the rider is all important.

So maybe now you can see why it is that you've never duplicated the manufacturer's claimed 1/4-mile time. You didn't have the setup. Now you do. Unfortunately, you still don't have Jay Gleason.

—Joe Kress



It was another story altogether as Gillies discovered when the V-Max broke loose at over 140 mph—in dirt.

TOP SPEED:

NINJA 1000R	154.10
V-MAX	151.00
GSX-R1100	151.00
FJ1200	147.54
NINJA 900	146.34

QUARTER-MILE:

GSX-R1100	10.500/130.81
V-MAX	10.500/128.20
FJ1200	10.539/128.02
NINJA 1000R	10.657/128.38
NINJA 900	10.729/127.65

Full Throttle, and Never Looking Back—Until Now.

• Suzuki's GSX-R1100 shouldn't have won this year's high-speed shootout. In fact, CYCLE GUIDE's three previous Quickest and Fastest meets should never even have taken place. The reason dates back to CYCLE GUIDE's first hyperbike shootout, in November 1978. The entrants included the Honda CBX, Kawasaki Z1-R, Suzuki GS1000EC and Yamaha XS1100F.

While this hyperactive quartet never matched up for top-speed runs at El Mirage dry lake, their 1/4-mile performances—at the time—were stunning: CBX, 11.60 seconds/117.6 mph; XS1100F, 12.12/111.9, GS1000EC, 12.15/110.9; Z1-R, 12.21/109.9. The results of the test led Paul Dean (editor at the time) to write in his editorial, "Lowering ETs from the CBX's 11.6 to, say, 11 flat would entail more engineering and development than it did to get them from 13 flat to 11.6. So what you see now may be all you get, acceleration-wise."

Most of us felt the same way, that the industry was quickly approaching the top of the performance curve. Not to be left out, I joined the staff a few months into 1979 when the associate editor position opened up. I took the job, becoming the magazine's primary 1/4-mile tester.

At first, Dean's prophecy held true. Throughout 1979, no streetbike matched the 24-valve CBX at the dragstrip, although the KZ1300 six-shooter and XS1100F Special came close, with 11.79 ETs. So we decided to display the Honda's muscle again with a top-speed run at the Bonneville Salt Flats. We called our project the "Ride-It-Up-Ride-It-Back Record" because Editorial Assistant Dean Taylor and I took the CBX and a motorhome to Bonneville and back. I had the better run on The Salt—130.05 mph—while Taylor and the CBX clocked 80-plus on a Utah trooper's radar gun.

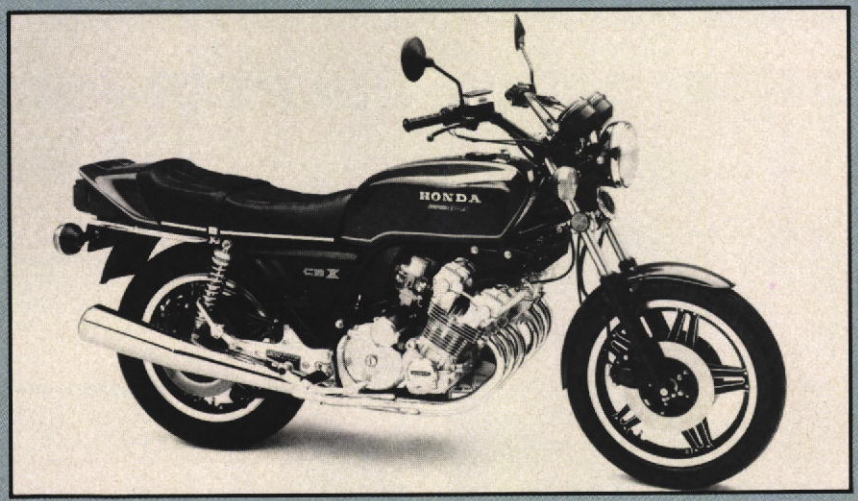
That winter, while my arms were reinserted into their shoulder sockets, Michael Jordan and I visited Japan. We were the first American journalists to ride the GS1100 at Suzuki's test track near Hamamatsu. When we returned to California, I boasted to the staff that the GS was, at last, the summit we had waited for: "It's all downhill from here," I said.

The Suzuki didn't let me down, either. It's 1/4-mile time was—now hang onto your BVDs—11.43/118.3. Three other bikes joined the Suzuki in the 11s for 1980 (XS1100GX, 11.94; GS1000, 11.98; and CG's project bike, a turbocharged Honda CB750F, 11.99) making it a banner year for performance. We had stretched the envelope as far as it would go—or so I thought, when I decided I had had enough and stepped down as the magazine's throttle jock.

Riley Tharp replaced me late in 1980. I spent two months training him for 1/4-mile testing, and while he showed promise, Tharp lacked the killer instinct—at first. Finally, I pulled him aside while dragstrip testing the GS750E, and said, "Riley, we're here to test this bike, right?" He nodded. "And if something breaks on it, we owe it to the readers to tell them, right?" Another nod. "And it's not our bike, right?" He grinned, then went out and reeled off some beautiful runs. He had been too gentle with the clutch while launching off the line, that was all.

Tharp, along with Mark Diotte, turned in some good dragstrip times during 1981, putting six bikes into the 11s: GS1100EX, 11.36; GS1000S Katana, 11.39; GPz1100, 11.44; KZ1100, 11.62; KZ1000J, 11.62; and XS1100LH, 11.99. Five more visited the 11s in 1982 (GS1100EG, 11.2; GPz1100, 11.33; KZ1000R, 11.85; GS1100G, 11.92; KZ1100 Spectre, 11.96), setting the stage for CYCLE GUIDE's inaugural Quickest and Fastest Shootout. In the magic fingers of Jay Gleason, the 1983 winner was the Kawasaki Turbo 750, punching the clock at 10.839/122.95, and registering 145.07 mph at El Mirage Dry Lake.

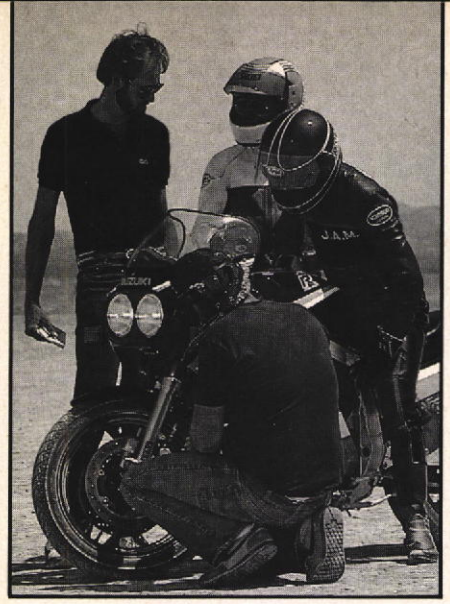
Speeds have gone up and 1/4-mile times have been lowered since then, but one thing remains the same: The technology is still growing. Now that the smoke has settled again this year, we should stop and reflect on two important aspects about performance in the '80s: We weren't exactly on target in our 1978 predictions about future technology, and that riders will continue putting that technology to the test. Next stop—the 9s. —*Dain Gingerelli*



Quickest & Fastest

146.34 on its fastest run. In addition, Yamaha's FJ1200, judged by both riders to have the cushiest ride and the best fairing, just barely topped the FJ1100's best top speed with a 147.54 mph showing.

The last two bikes to run were the V-Max and the GSX-R1100, both coming to El Mirage tied for first place with identical dragstrip times. Miller, flat on the tank in his best flattrack tuck, piloted the bulky, unfaired V-Max through the 1/4-mile-long speed trap at 151.00 mph two times in a row. In fact, the Yamaha made three successive runs at 150 or above, a feat equaled only by the 1000R. Still, we reasoned, the fully faired big-bore Suzuki could easily better the Yamaha's performance by a wide margin, and maybe even



That a musclebound boulevardier and a sleek sportbike should perform virtually identically in such different venues was nearly beyond believe. But in the end one ruled. . . .

put the current top-speed leader, the Ninja 1000R, on the trailer.

But sometimes everything you know is wrong, and this was one of those times. The GSX-R refused to pull redline in top gear, with the power signing off at about 9900 rpm and speeds hovering in the 148–149 mph range. Gillies and the Suzuki finally put forth a mighty effort and tripped the lights at 151.00 mph flat—once again tying the V-Max. And from then until the last bike was rolled onto the trailer at the end of the day, neither Gillies nor Miller could prod another fraction of speed from either the Suzuki or the Yamaha.

Improbable as the tie at Baylands might have seemed, the dead heat at El Mirage was almost unthinkable. That a musclebound boulevardier and a sleek sportbike should perform virtually identically in two such different venues was nearly beyond belief. After we picked our jaws off the ground, however, we gave the GSX-R the nod as the dragstrip king over the V-Max, by virtue of the Suzuki's slightly higher terminal speed in the 1/4-mile. And there was no doubt about the identity of the victor at El Mirage—that distinction clearly belonged to Kawasaki's Ninja 1000R, more than 3 mph faster than its nearest competitor. So with the individual honors awarded, that left only the overall title of Quickest and Fastest Bike of 1986 to hand out.

A combined tally of each bike's finish at Baylands and El Mirage tells the story. The 900 Ninja's 5/5 finish earns it last place in this year's field, just behind the FJ1200's 3/4 showing. And despite its awesome top speed, the Ninja 1000R's 4/1 ranking nets only third place. Finally, although the V-Max tied the GSX-R1100 mile for mile in top speed, the Suzuki's higher terminal speed at Baylands relegates the Yamaha, last year's overall winner, to second spot at the dragstrip—and in this year's overall standings—by virtue of a 2/2 effort.

Which leaves just one bike to wear this year's crown of speed—Suzuki's GSX-R1100, a bike that combines a devastating 1/4-mile punch with enough power to almost triple the Double Nickel. If you're looking for nothing less than the most arm-stretching, eyeball-flattening performance motorcycle you can buy this year, look no further than the GSX-R1100—but look quick, because it moves fast. ●

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We might also point out that the Radian looks a lot better than any $2399 motorcycle has a right to. With deep, rich paint. Brilliantly chromed pipes. And a plush, handsome seat.

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GUIDE LINES

Cycle Guide's Monthly Chronicle of Scoops, Tips, Rumors and Hard Facts

BY LARRY WORKS

COMING SOON

• If you read the March issue report on the Milan Show, you might be experiencing a little *déjà vu* right about now. But look a little closer; this isn't the Cagiva/Ducati 750 Paso we covered a few months back. Confusing the two is understandable, though, because on the surface the only difference between the 750 Paso and the 350 Paso shown here is the numerical designation on the sidepanel. It isn't just just a matter of similar bodywork, either, because wheelbase, width, steering head angle, suspension and frame are shared by the two Ducati/Cagivas. What you're seeing is the miracle of downsizing without any real shrinkage.

At least, none on the surface. What lies under the glass of this 350 is the same desmodromic SOHC 349cc engine that powers the F3 350 we covered in the Milan report—not the 750's 748cc motor. In this case, all other things literally being equal, the 350 is a bit down on performance from its larger stablemate. For instance, the claim for peak power output for the 350 is 39 horsepower, down some 36 from the 750's 75 horses. Naturally, with lower horsepower than the 750, the 350's top speed is lower as well; the factory claims 109 mph for the 350, as opposed to the 750's 137 mph.

All of which goes toward producing two mutually exclusive points of view about the bike. To some, the 350 Paso is one of the most underpowered 750s money can buy. To others, it's one of the few full-size 350 sportbikes available today.

• Another perplexing new approach first seen at the Milan Show was embodied in Moto Morini's 501 Excalibur. At least, its an entirely new approach for Morini. The engine, an all-alloy OHV 72-degree vee-twin, is essentially a redesigned version of Morini's time-tested 347cc vee-twin. The 501 motor, which actually displaces 507cc, is claimed to put 42 horsepower through its six-speed gearbox. The motor rests in a square-tube frame based loosely on the chassis of Morini's dual-purpose 500 Camel.

There's nothing dual about the purpose of the 370-pound Excalibur, though; this is a street custom cast in the American idiom, designed to float squarely down the strongest currents of the U.S. motorcycle mainstream. Technically, the execution was a success; perhaps too much so. From its teardrop tank, high-rise handlebar and stepped seat to its forward-mounted

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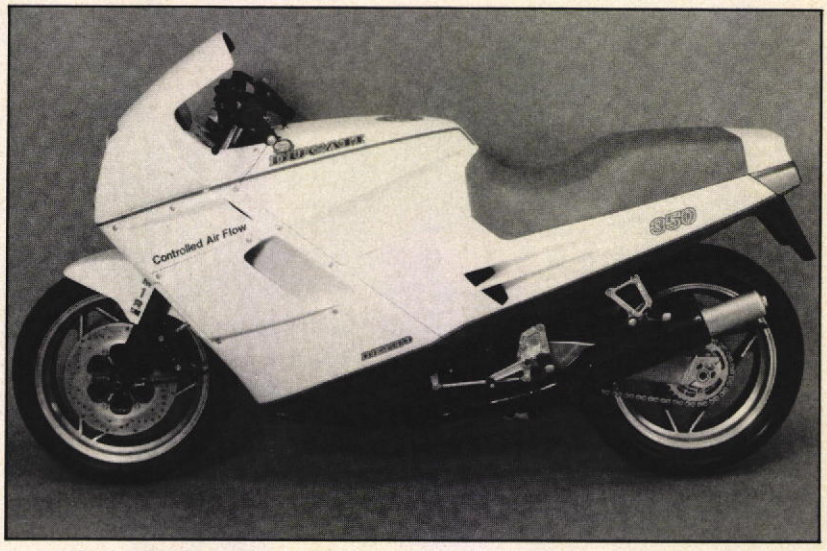
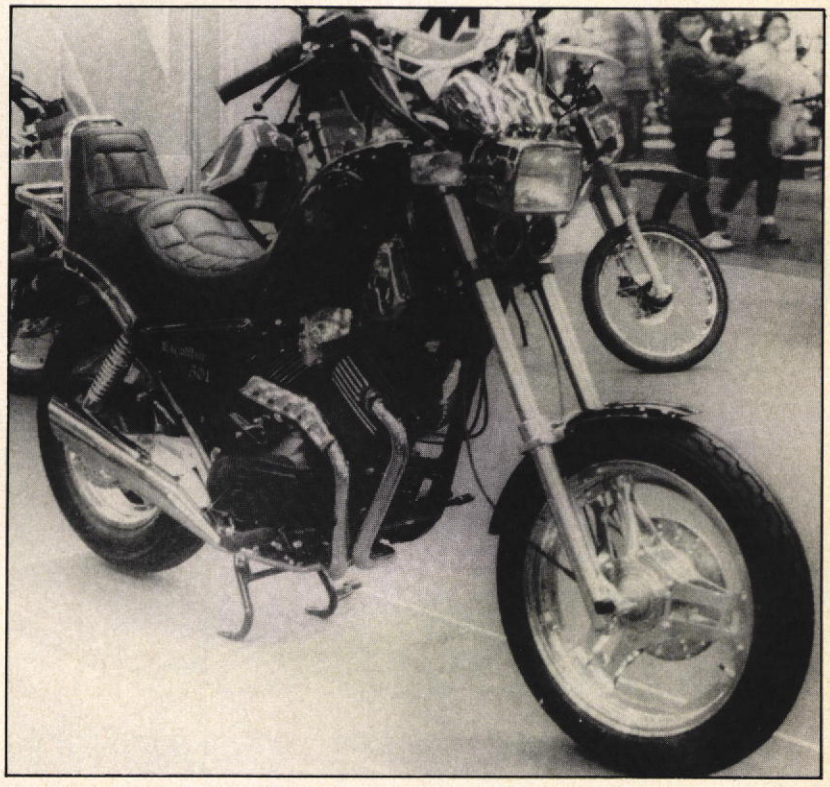


Ducati/Cagiva 350 Paso shares nearly everything with its bigger, faster stablemate

A 750 in everything but displacement.



Moto Morini's 501 Excalibur should make no waves in the moto-mainstream

But will it sink into a sea of cruisers?

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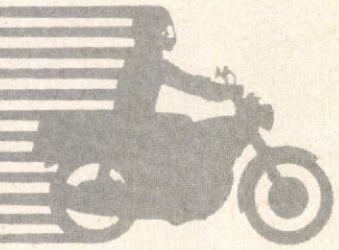

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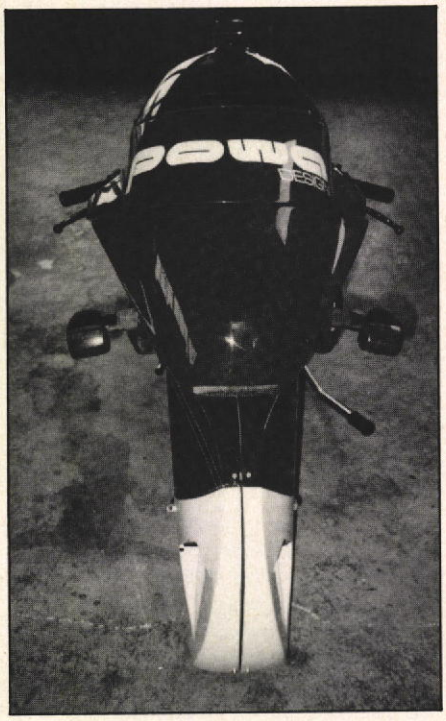
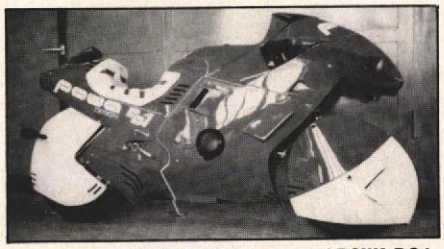
foot controls and high-polish chrome, the Excalibur looks like it could have originated on any of a half-dozen different assembly lines from just as many different manufacturers.

• It's always possible that Morini's Excalibur might so successfully fit in that it will all but disappear into the rolling army of American-style cruiserbikes. That could never happen with *this* bike, though. Moko, Swiss manufacturer of an otherworldly 1500cc Harley-Davidson we've featured before, has produced an equally remarkable Kawasaki-powered de-

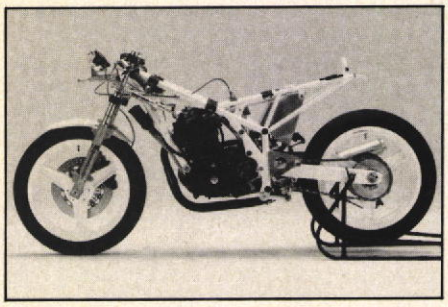


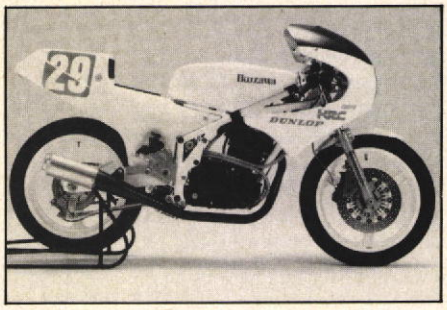


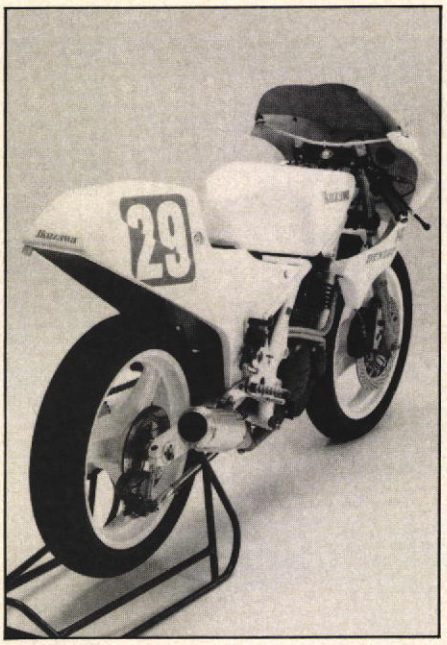
Three faces of Moko's GPz-powered POWA DO1

Posing a problem: Which is its best side?

vice, the POWA DO1. Underneath that thin, thin fiberglass shell resides a thoroughly mundane—by comparison—GPz1100 engine. Running gear of the POWA includes a Forcella Italia fork, a single-shock rear end and brakes by Brembo. That's not much in the way of detail about the red-and-white Mokobike, but then perhaps performance isn't the question here. After all, some bikes can raise a ruckus even when they're parked.







TH1R is singularly simple from any angle

Performance without doodads.

• Others, like the Ikuwaza TH1R, show their best attributes in motion, preferably on a racetrack. The Japanese-made TH1R is the latest in the suddenly formed long line of throughly modern thumpers, and is entirely bereft of the bells and whistles that mark the Moko. What you see is all there is: a four-valve Honda en-

Continued

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gine—punched out to 628cc and a claimed 61 horsepower—bolted into a tubular steel frame. A Marzocchi fork and White Power rear shock deal with suspension chores, with stopping handled by a combination of Lockheed and Brembo components. This is what thumper racing is all about, no gimmicks, tricks or wasted effort. Think of the TH1R as undiluted tincture of four-stroke performance.

FEDERAL CASES

• These days, the motorcycle business is very much a world endeavor, and what happens in other parts of the world can produce radical effects on motorcycling at home. For instance, transport experts throughout Europe are examining a new Swiss standard that might produce almost immediate changes in over-the-counter sportbikes. The new standard is said to drastically reduce allowable hydrocarbon exhaust emissions for two-strokes; reportedly, few if any of the current batch of two-stroke wrist-rockets can pass the stringent Swiss requirements. If this standard is adopted throughout Europe—as is being considered right now—the recent spate of high-performance half-liter two-strokes could become little more than a hiccup in moto history. On the other hand, a trans-Europe crackdown on two-strokes might well prod the major bikebuilders into cleaning up their two-strokes sufficiently to pass U.S. EPA standards.

• While the prospect of EPA-legal, high-performance two-strokes in U.S. showrooms is enticing, it probably won't happen overnight. Such might not be the case with anti-lock braking systems, however. And the impetus for such a requirement might well come from a new British proposal. Despite the fact that no current production motorcycles feature true anti-lock brakes, there's a strong possibility that such systems soon will be mandated for bikes in Great Britain. The British DOT has been conducting tests on the available aftermarket systems ("Hi-Tech," October 1985) and has begun to urge manufacturers to fit anti-lock braking systems voluntarily. Reportedly, proposals are being considered there that would require such systems on new models. Similar proposals reportedly have been discussed by European legislators since last December. The race to see which major manufacturer comes up with production anti-lock braking first—both BMW and Kawasaki have been linked with such projects—might be legislated into a five- or six-way tie.

• Another new British standard—one that has gone far past the proposal stage—will replace all other existing British helmet requirements over a period of two years. The new certification, BS6658, reportedly includes stiffer standards for penetration, shock-absorption and coverage, and will include tests for chinpiece strength and helmet retention. The new standard is said to encourage experimental design, however, and helmets without conventional strap systems will be allowed.

• And in Australia, what will be allowed is a slightly healthier exhaust note—at least, a little louder than the upper limit permitted by the hotly disputed Design Rule N1 (Federal Cases, April 1986). According to our sources Down Under, N1 is due to be scrapped in favor of ADR MCN, a far more moderate proposal. The new Australian noise legislation will be based on ECE 4101, the standard expected to be implemented throughout Europe this summer. Both allow for model-specific noise levels, a 94-decibel stationary limit for motorcycles of more than 175cc displacement, and an upper limit of 82 dB on a ride-by test.

• Back in the U.S., the subject continues to be speed, pure and simple. A side issue to that topic is whether or not radar detectors are merely radio receivers. If they are classified as radios, their regulation is strictly a federal concern, under the provisions of the 1934 Communications Act and not subject to action by individual states. Reportedly, decisions on that point will settle cases on radar-detector bans in Maryland, Massachusetts, Maine, New York, Rhode Island and Wisconsin this year.

• Of course, detector bans might prove to be old news if the Double Nickel were declared unconstitutional. And it has been, in a Monterey

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County (California) Municipal Court. The case that produced that decision concerned a California woman ticketed for traveling 65 mph. The judge hearing the case dismissed it, on the basis that California's maximum-speed law is unconstitutional. His nine-page decision concluded that the law is in violation of the 10th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution because it was "enacted under federal coercion." Don't expect to speed scot-free in California, though; in handing down his decision, the judge made it clear that drivers should count on enforcement of the 55-mph limit "unless they are confident of getting into (his) court."

• Oregon, too, has found the Double Nickel to be lacking in constitutionality, at least as far as one justice of the peace in that state is concerned. He dismissed the case of a man accused of driving 67 mph in a 55-mph zone. The basis for dismissal was that Oregon's maximum-speed limit, OAR 10-TCX 28 (1), was enacted during a nationwide petroleum shortage that no longer exists. And because the Oregon statute didn't require periodic examination of that state's fuel situation, it has come to be "contrary to fact" and an "unconstitutional exercise of authority." But don't count on Oregon as a free-speed zone, either. Outside of a few isolated pockets of clear judical opposition, the Double Nickel is still very much a subject of contention.

• No one's yet mentioned it, but you're liable to see something new in the background on NBC's "Miami Vice": motorcycle cops. That's because the Florida Highway Patrol has just added nine Harley-Davidson FXRPs to its fleet in Dade County, where "Vice" is filmed. The motorcycle unit is termed experimental, but local officials reportedly seemed pleased. They've already termed its ticket output "high," and said they anticipate an increase as the officers adjust to two wheels instead of four.

RUMORS

• The rumor mill's gossip output this month was kicked into high gear by a prototype model debuted by a major German autobuilder at the recent Geneva Motor Salon. Phones started ringing, possibilities began percolating and theories started forming on the spot. But there were a few surprises in store.

First of them was that the presentation was by Volkswagen, not BMW. Second was that the model, called the Scooter, is propelled by a four-cylinder engine producing 88 horsepower, and tops out at a claimed 137 mph. The increased gossip production seems a bit out of place, however, because the Scooter isn't a two-wheeler, despite its name. But it isn't a four-wheeler, either. This particular Scooter is a three-wheeled contrivance with the front end of a VW Golf, gull-wing doors and seating for an intimate duo. Despite all its promise, this turned out to be a perfectly good rumor dashed on the rocks of reality.

• Still, it takes a disproportionately large amount of reality to quash even a minute trace of speculation. For instance, sincere denials at

Continued

GREGG SMITH RODE TOURMAX INTO THE GROUND.

Gregg Smith, who works as a service consultant for Dun & Bradstreet, averages one-hundred miles a day on his 1983 Yamaha Venture XV12. On September 5, 1984, he had a set of Tourmax™ tires installed with the odometer reading out 54,051 miles.

On May 14, 1985, Gregg wrote to us about Tourmax: "These tires have made a believer out of me! They've traveled 25,401 miles (odometer now at 79,452 miles) and still have several thousand safe miles left on the tread."

"What's more, I found the tires improved my cycle's cornering ability. The tread pattern and generous rain sipes made my daily trips through Southern New England's wet and slippery winter more secure."

Tourmax tires are rewriting the story of motorcycle touring. From the 10-block commute to the 1,000-mile day. With massive traction blocks, heavy-duty construction, and Optimax™ Technology. Plus Carlisle's unique bead retention feature to keep the rubber on the wheel no matter what.

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TO THE MAX AND BEYOND.

This P-D DR is nothing more than a figment of overactive imaginations

Strange, though, how it casts a Suzuki-shaped shadow.

Suzuki have done absolutely nothing to put an end to talk that a Paris-Dakar DR thumper has been in the works for some time. Frankly, it's embarrassing how some insiders keep grasping at straws in the face of abject refutation. We've even heard that sources prone to wishful thinking are swearing they've already seen a prototype of the bike, complete with oversized fenders, an enormous fuel tank, a headlamp fairing and a front brake cover. But really, who are you going to believe?

• Well, you can start by believing the talk about a new British streetbike, built around the 1000cc Weslake vee-twin engine. Overseas sources have confirmed the story with the manufacturer of the 119-pound four-valve engine, which uses Cosworth pistons and is claimed to produce a shade more than 100 horsepower. Reportedly, both SOHC and DOHC valvetrains will be offered. Beyond that confirmation of intent, however, details—including financing for the project—are sketchy, although there's talk the engine will be placed in a Harris frame.

• Last, Cagiva's recent buyout of Husqvarna has produced a flurry of sustained speculation. One of the most popular of the takeover tales is that the vertical-twin PROOF 2-000 Husqvarna displayed at the Milan Show was the tip-off to insiders that the deal had been struck with Cagiva. Further, some contend, the PROOF, instantly nicknamed "Black Queen," is on the docket as a near-future production model for the newly flush Husqvarna, although it might not be built in in Sweden. A related rumor currently making the rounds in Europe is that production at Husky's Ödeshög, Sweden, factory will cease within three years, with all tooling and assembly moved to Italy.

HARD CASH

• Honda reportedly is spending nearly $20 million on a new motorcycle assembly plant in

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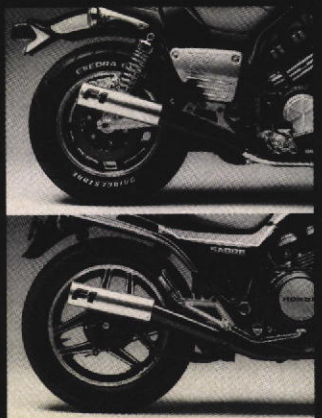

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Guadalajara, Mexico. Production of motorcycles of 350cc-plus engine displacement is scheduled to begin at the new plant within one year; smaller models reportedly will be added to the assembly line there within five years. The Mexico plant will join Honda's existing non-domestic motorcycle production in Brazil, Italy and the U.S.

Indian-made KB-100 due soon

KHI expands its borders.

• Kawasaki, too, reportedly is expanding its operations outside of Japan. In addition to reports of Kawasaki's trade agreements over motorcycle production in mainland China (Hard Cash, November/December 1985), a new program of technical collaboration has been launched in India. The long-established Indian firm Bajaj Autos LTD reportedly has struck a deal with Kawasaki Heavy Industries of Japan, and will begin production of 80cc and 100cc Kawasaki-based motorcycles within weeks. The first product of that collaboration will be the KB-100, a two-stroke single with enclosed-chain final drive.

• One market the Japanese haven't cracked yet is the Soviet Union. Nonetheless, two-wheeled life continues behind the Iron Curtain, and 1985 production figures recently have been made public. Reportedly, about 1.1 million motorcycles and motorbikes (mopeds excluded) were produced in the Soviet Union in 1985, meaning production was off about 0.2 percent from the year before. During that same period, sales there reportedly fell by 4 percent. Official production figures for Czechoslovakia are a bit more positive and include a production increase of 8 percent.

• Returning to U.S. motorcycling, the ante in personal protection has just been raised. While Bell continues to offer a full range of lower-priced helmets, the California-based firm recently introduced the Ultra, a full-coverage graphite/Kevlar helmet with a Durvil fire-

Bell's new top hat, the Ultra

"If you've got a $1000 head. . ."

retardant interior. The Ultra is available in black/gold or red/silver color schemes, comes with its own helmet bag, has an adjustable venting system and carries a Snell '85 certification. It won't be remembered for that little Snell tag inside, though. Instead, the price tag on the outside will probably draw most of the attention. The newest—and priciest—Bell retails for $1000. Things have come a long way from the days of "If you've a $10 head, wear a $10 helmet."

• Still, $10 can buy buy quite a bit in today's moto-economy: a piece of motorcycling history. The AMA has launched a campaign to purchase a replica of the first motorcycle (Coming Soon, April 1986) for donation to the American Motorcycle Heritage Foundation. To raise

Continued

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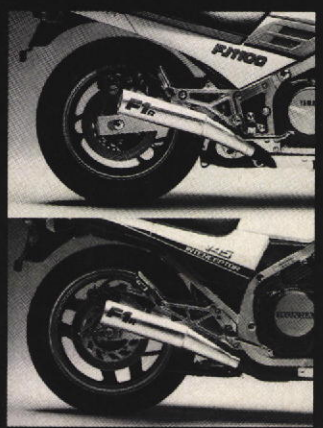

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AMA issuing "titles" on replica Daimler

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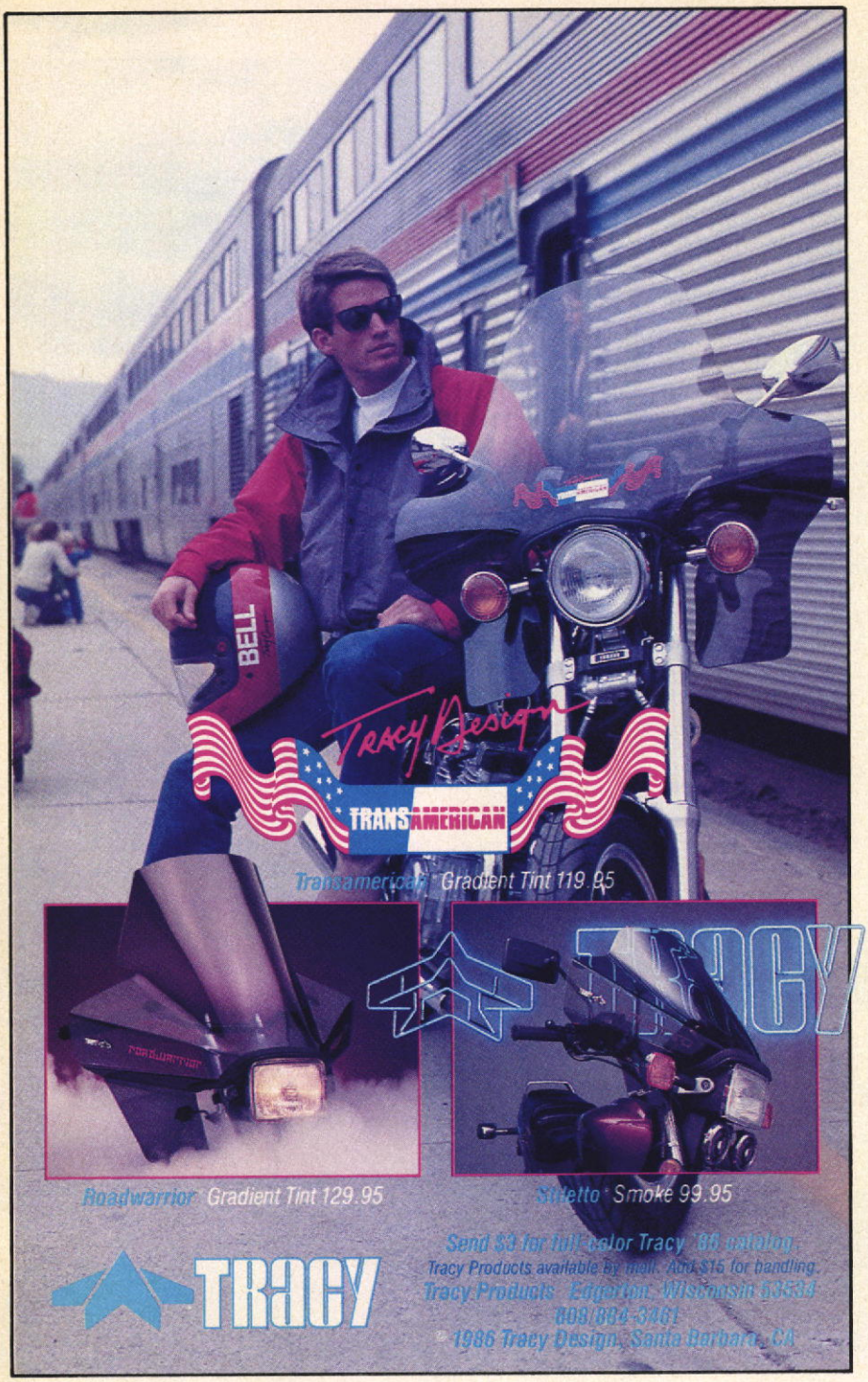
the $20,000 necessary to buy the bike, a hand-built replica Daimler, the AMA is offering personalized commemorative "titles" to anyone who contributes $10 or more to the fund. To buy into this worthwhile project, send $10 or more to "Help Buy the Daimler," American Motorcycle Heritage Foundation, P.O. Box 6114, Westerville, Ohio 43081-6114.

APART FROM THE CROWD

• From the Wish I Were A Kid Again file comes one of the hottest-selling new two-wheelers in Japan, the Suzuki Gag. It resembles nothing so much as the infant hybrid offspring of an RG500 and a GSX-R750. There are four versions of the Gag: Pink's Character, Battle Plane, Pop Art and the racy version, Replica; they differ only in paint schemes. But before you dismiss the Gag as merely a small joke, consider its specifications: 24-inch seat height; 10-inch, three-spoke wheels; an air-cooled, SOHC 50cc four-stroke engine with a claimed power output of 5.2 horsepower at 7000 rpm; full race-type fairing; hydraulic disc front brake; clip-ons; a single-shock rear rear suspension. Any kid in his right mind would give his eyeteeth to crouch down behind the racing bubble and ride off. But the punchline to this Gag is that it isn't for kids; the bike has full lighting and street-legal status. You probably won't be Gagging on this new Suzuki for some time, though. For the moment they'll be exercising their street-legality only in Japan.

• Another tale of tiny two-wheelers is that of a race staged as a sideshow to a recent British motorcycle exposition: a five-hour moped endurance race. The event reportedly was considered as kind of background noise to the show, but whose endurance was it supposed to test—the riders', the machines'—or the



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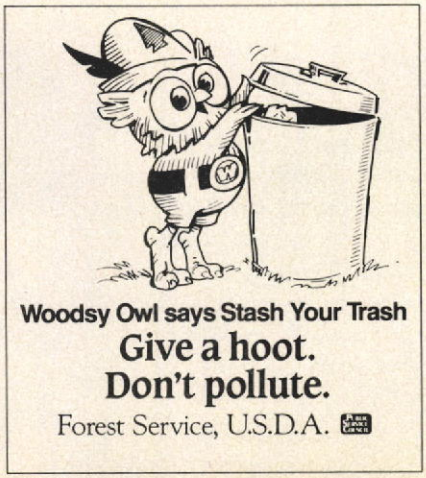

spectators'?

• If you've read this far, you don't need the product of a certain California firm. It's a tape of questions and answers from the California DMV license tests for motorcycles. For $15.95 plus postage and handling, you can listen to the tape before taking the test. That's $15.95 plus postage and handling more than the free booklet the DMV provides. Still, such a product has potential for those who can't manage to read the manual. Presumably, those people will make fine additions to the California highway system—as soon as talking traffic signs are installed throughout the state.

• Moving from the ridiculous to the sublime, there's the Smithsonian Institution's new exhibit on the motorcycle and its importance in American history. Six historical motorcycles, assorted tools, documents and more than 30 photos will treat motorcycling's past, its role in competition and its fuel-efficient future. The artifacts are being collected with the participation of the AMA. Motorcycling, friends, has arrived.

AFTER THE FACT

• Those of you who read our preview of the pre-production Honda VFR750R (March 1986) know by now that the bike was missing something: self-propulsion. But it was also missing something else—Honda's Race Kit. The engine kit for the VFR750R contains such standard hot-rod staples as higher-compression pistons, titanium connecting rods, larger carburetors, higher-lift cams, stiffer valve springs, redesigned exhaust, a close-ratio gearbox, clutch springs and ignition. The kit is claimed to elevate the standard 750's 105 horsepower to a lofty 130.

• In a note on the British motorcycle industry's $3 million campaign for 1985 (Hard Cash, July 1985), an $800,000 follow-up campaign for '86 is said to have been scrapped. Reportedly, a lukewarm reception for the initial effort called a halt to the program. Funding for the campaign was to have come from a tax on sales of new models. Apparently, it wasn't possible to Pound motorcycling into public awareness.

• A second look at the Donghai 750 and Xingfu 250 reported in last issue has shown some new developments. Overseas sources confirm that a deal is firming up for British distribution of the two Chinese motorcycles, with Avon tires reportedly being linked with any export arrangement.

• The Double Nickel usually ends up in Federal Cases, but some new information clearly belongs here. It concerns the so-called 85th-Percentile Rule, in which the safest speed limits are those closest to the speeds a majority of people actually travel. The thinking is that speed *differential*—not speed itself—causes accidents. According to recent studies, the speed limit that would dramatically better national highway traffic accident statistics isn't 55, it's 67.7 mph. •

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RETROFILE:

1937 BSA Vee-Twin 750

BY JOE KRESS

Taking some liberties with the lady; restoration more by style than by rote.

Purists, historians, curators and all other keepers-of-the-lore, take note: This '37 BSA vee-twin is not a 100 percent correct restoration. That's understandable. It's even laudable, once you know who's responsible for this bike being on the road at all. It belongs to, and was lovingly rebuilt, by Dick Mann. *That* Dick Mann—the two-time AMA Grand National Champion and winner of more Nationals than he can remember without looking in a book. And Mann makes no apologies about his 750's historically incorrect state. "It's exactly the way I would have had this bike within a week if I had bought it new in '37," he says. "I never leave anything stock for long." *Continued*

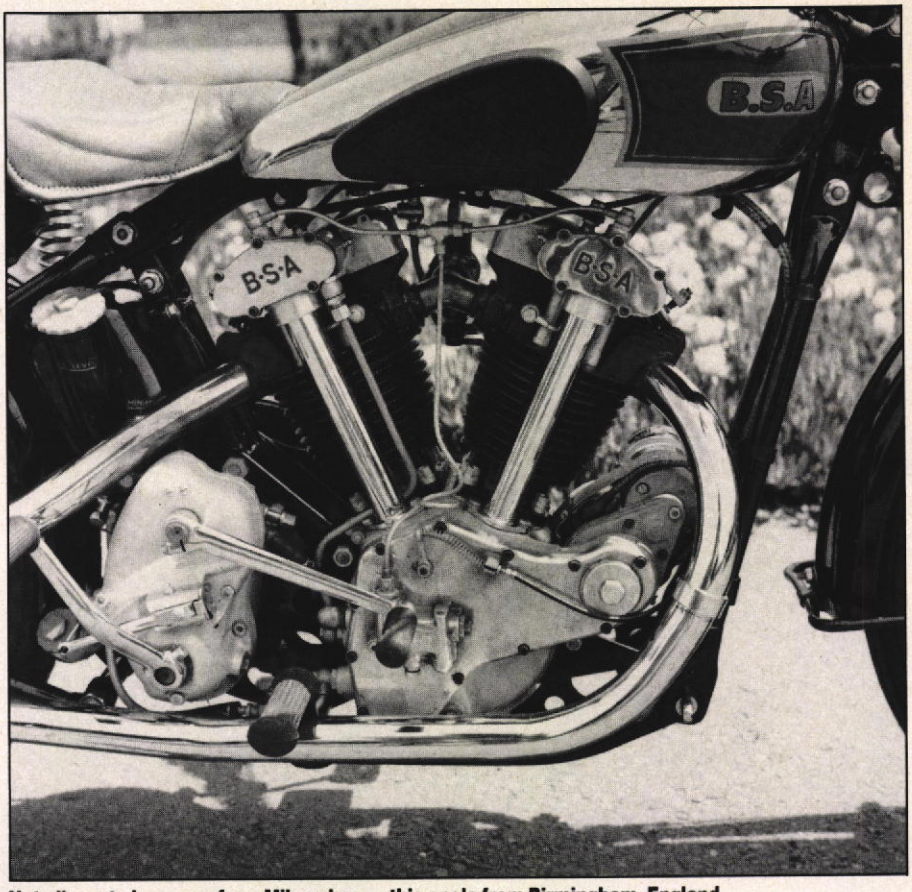
PHOTOGRAPHY © 1986 JOE KRESS

So with a friendly nod to the offended, Dick Mann's 1937 BSA, Model Y-13 750cc OHV vee-twin, is now a sportbike. Mann believes the Beezer started life as the business side of a sidecar rig. "Most of these English vees had chairs on them," he explains, pointing to frame lugs that most likely supported a passenger's perch. It makes no difference. Not many people are even aware that England produced a variety of vee-twins, not just the legendary Vincent. Park this bike, and you'll get an "I didn't know BSA made a vee" response every time.

But Dick Mann knew about the BSA vee-twin, long before he'd actually seen one. His first encounter came from pictures and part numbers in a catalog, a discovery made while working at Hap Alzina's BSA distributorship in '52. None of the bikes was in this country then. In fact, even now there aren't many more than that here—Mann has heard of another stored in Massachusetts, but that's it. So with scarcity going for it, too, it's not very likely that casual observers will pick up that the seat is wrong, the fender's not original, the headlight's not OE Birmingham '37. If they do notice, and dismiss the bike as a result, well . . . they've missed the point. And they've missed one heck of a neat bike.

"I bought it sight unseen about a year ago," Mann recalls. He had spotted the rare twin advertised in a British magazine. After a friend in England confirmed that the bike was pretty much all there, Mann wired the money and instructions to "crate it." Impatience partially explains the lack of pure authenticity in the restoration; Mann wanted to ride, not wrench. Once this enclosed-intake/exposed-exhaust twin had been gone through top to bottom, its frame and running gear attended to, and the ancient British electrics massaged as much as humanly possible, he wasn't about to put the bike in a corner while he searched for a taillight lens. So the fenders are Mann originals, as are many of the other bits and pieces needed to get the BSA registered and on the road. The final touch was paint—wrong again, at least from the historically correct view. Instead of this stunning red and black finish, a '37 BSA would have been done in green. "But I don't know any American flattracker who would willingly paint a bike *that* color and ride it," Mann explains. Getting the picture?

Since completion, Mann figures he has no more than a couple of thousand miles logged on the twin. Quantity, it seems, isn't important. Quality is. "A bike like this compresses the entire motorcycling experience," he says. "A 150-mile ride is an adventure, a real workout." Think offroad miles, and you'll be close. Like a day in the dirt, a ride on this '37 demands total concentration—to the bike *and* the road ahead. Even getting the twin started is a ritual. Miss or shortcut one step in the process, and you might as well call a cab. Do it all right, though, and a single kick is all it takes. Every time.



Not all vee-twins come from Milwaukee—this one's from Birmingham, England

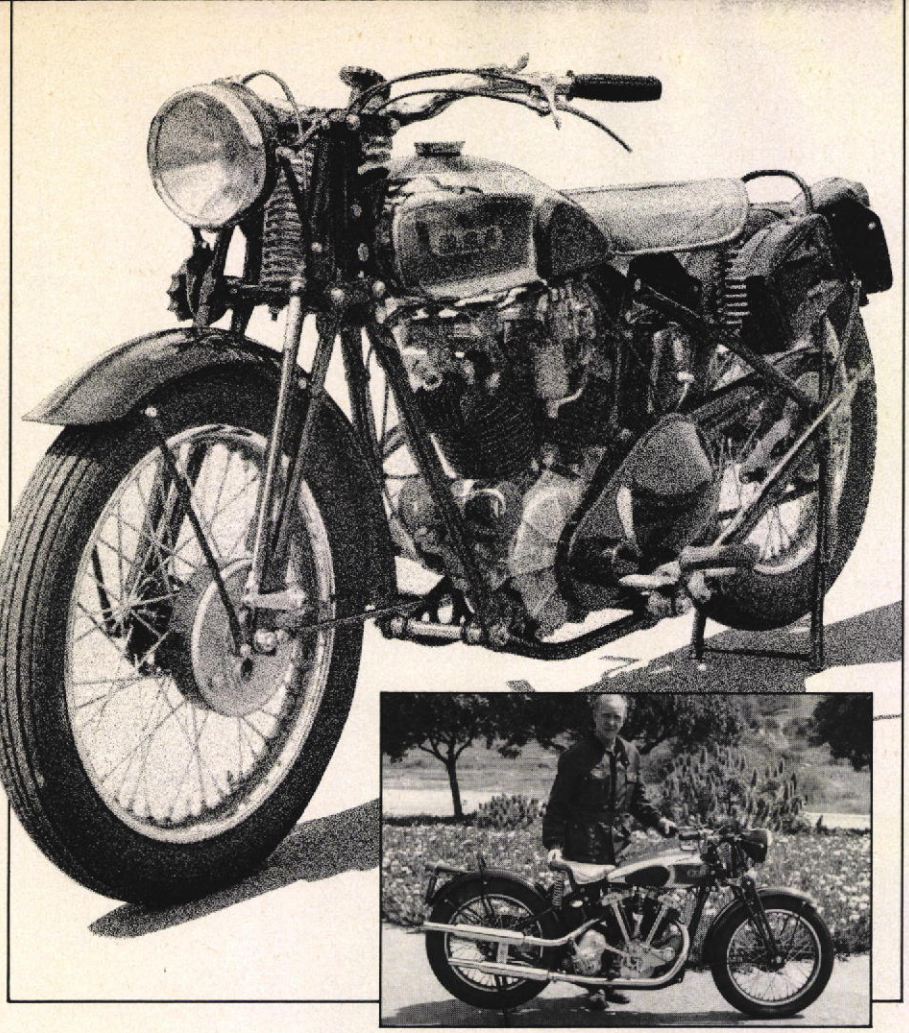
Mann's overhead valve BSA now roams the streets of America.

Y-13's girder fork delivers a stable ride

Not much travel, but no flex, either.

The girder-front/rigid-rear suspension takes some getting used to, as well. Mann likens it to a ride on a galloping horse. "Once you get yourself synched, though, it's a great feeling." It's also a very predictable one. Fork flex never enters the equation. Rear tire size does. "You'd be surprised at the difference, both in ride and handling, between a 3.50 and a 4.00 tire," Mann says. But the fork is really the object of amazement. and that's not because of how badly it works, either. "I remember when I was a kid," Mann offers, "reading all the road tests of newer bikes with telescopic suspension. The writers all complained that they missed the stable feel of a girder. I figured they were old men opposing change. I figured wrong." Indeed, within its admittedly limited travel, the girder on this BSA works just fine, thanks. It's not a system likely to make a comeback on the latest Honda, but it's no source of embarrassment for the BSA, either. "I surprise an awful lot of street riders," Mann smiles, "I come right up and ride with them, corners and all."

Not surprising, maybe, given Mann's credentials. But then, he isn't trying hard, either. "Fast street riding is a joke," he says. "No matter how fast someone thinks he's going on the highway, it's light years



away from what he'd see on the track. I don't even bother." End of lesson.

And back to this BSA, which is obviously no coddled piece. It might not see a lot of miles in a year, but it sees some intense ones. In fact, the bike has generated such enthusiasm around the Mann household that his wife demanded one, too. While her's isn't a vee-twin, it's a '37 BSA, a 250cc single. Don't even think stock. "I had an engine and a frame. What was I supposed to do, leave it in a crate for another 30 years while I looked for parts?" And no, that one's not painted green, either.

While it's doubtful the vee-twin will *ever* be green, someday it might be a bit closer to pure stock. Mann already has the correct headlight and front fender, with lines out for the rest of the missing hardware. But we won't hold our breath waiting. He isn't.

"I don't have anything against restorers who make a bike 100 percent correct, seal it off in some collection and look at it. In fact, I'm real glad they do what they do. It just means I don't have to. It means I'm free to ride." And riding, after all, is the point to owning a motorcycling in the first place. •

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YAMAHA

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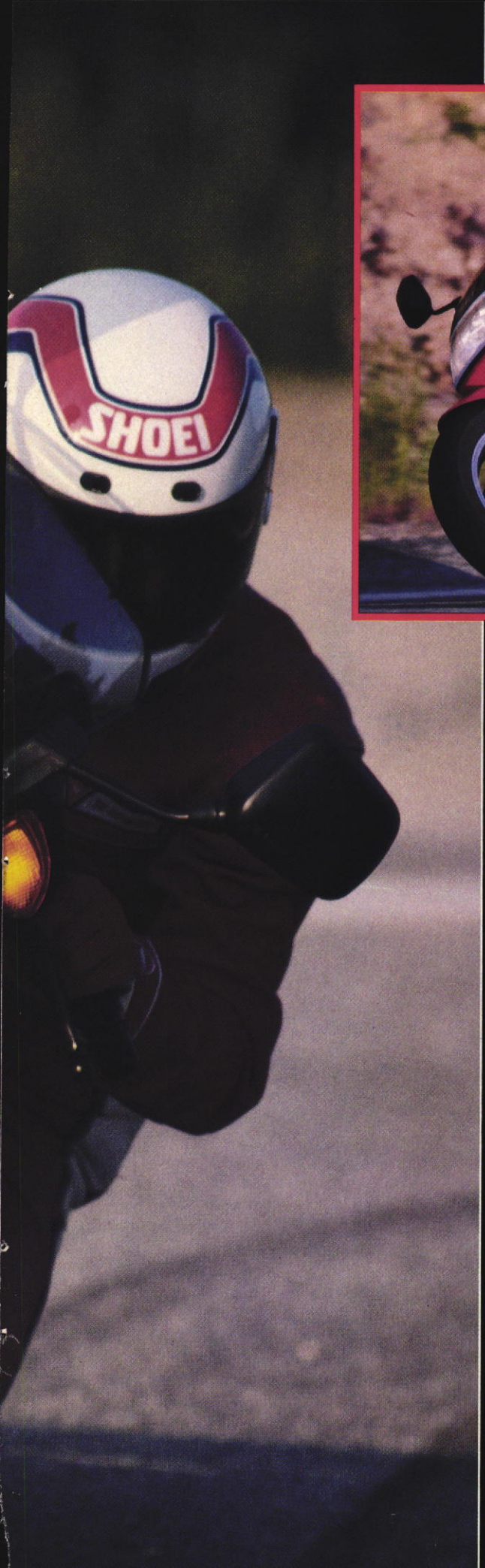


ROAD TEST:

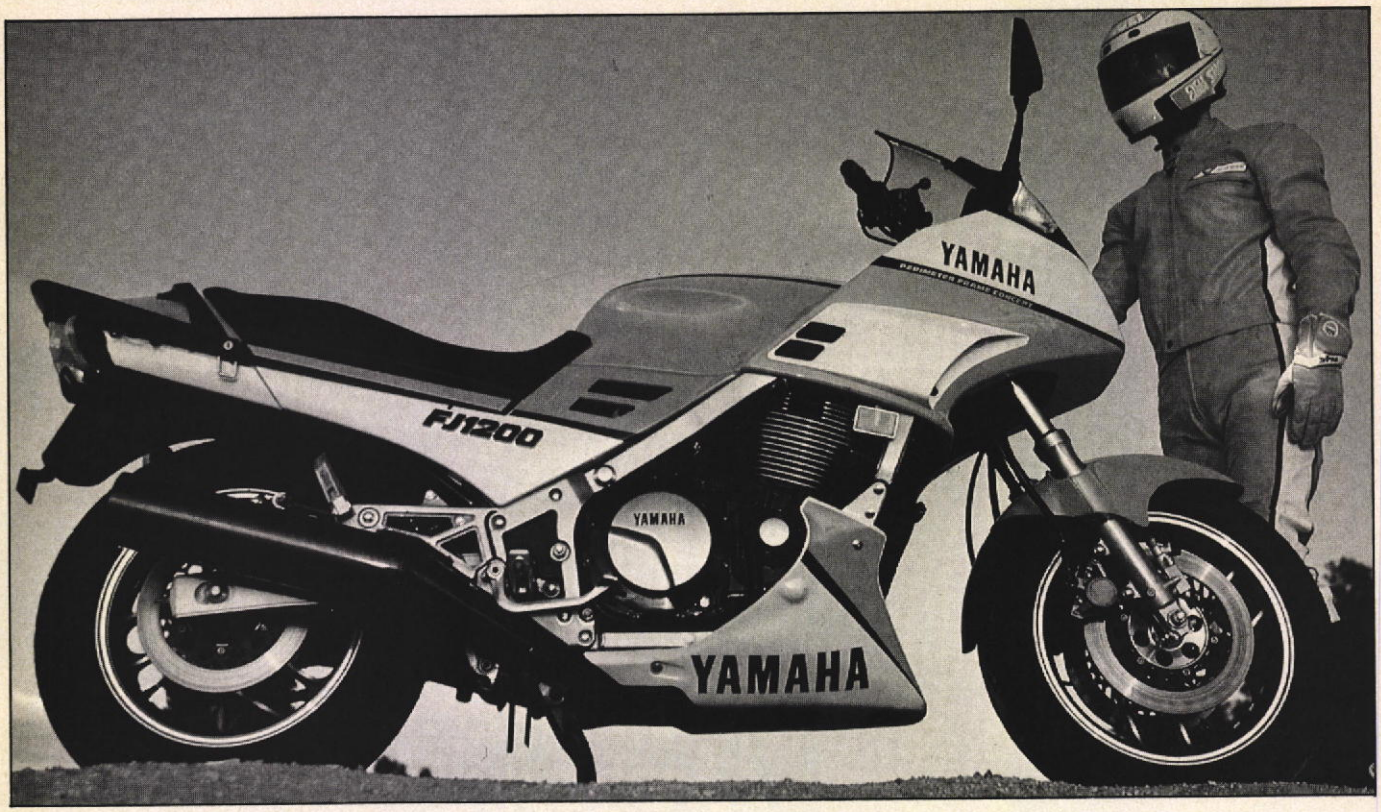
Yamaha FJ1200

Fast ticket to the middle ground.

BY MARC COOK

Life at the top of the heavyweight sportbike heap is anything but easy. Not only is the competition in this class burning as hot as Rambo's flame thrower, but each of the Big Four contributes a member—in Kawasaki's case, two—to this prestigious court. And considering that American riders have shown a marked preference for big-bore machinery, it's easy to imagine the manufacturers burning the midnight oil just to keep up with this high-power, high-stakes game.

Yamaha knows just how fierce the competition in the big-bike class is, because the firm's FJ1100 has, since '84, been the bike that sat at the top of the heap, ripe for picking off. That bike managed to stay ahead of the pack even in its sophomore year—if not in outright sporting ability, then as a competent, versatile and above all blindingly fast conveyance. This year, *Continued*

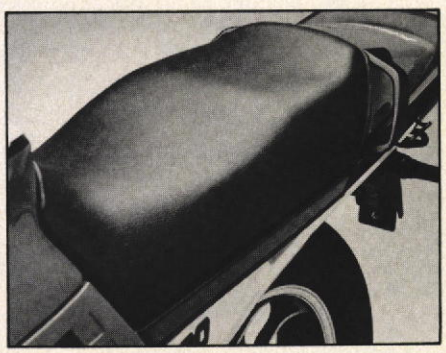


however, Yamaha saw the writing on the wall: Suzuki's GSX-R1100 and Kawasaki's Ninja 1000R were poised to eclipse the FJ's impressive speed and handling by a considerable margin, leaving the FJ with little more than its broad-band versatility to save it. And in a class where outright eyeball-flattening power is everything, that simply wouldn't be enough.

For that reason, it's easy to picture Yamaha's intentions with the FJ1200. In short, Yamaha wanted to make one of the fastest motorcycles on the planet faster—much faster. Not that the FJ1100 was exactly a slug: Its 11.002-second quarter-mile time placed it right up there with heavy hitters like the V-Max. But the 1200 is faster yet, posting a 10.851-second/127.47 mph clocking with our man Gillies aboard, and a stunning 10.539-second run with gunslinger Jay Gleason pulling the trigger. Yet despite its obvious acceleration advantage over the old bike, the FJ12 bettered its previous dry-lake top speed run by less than 1 mph.

Those numbers serve to illustrate how the FJ's extra cubic centimeters seem to have been put to work. Instead of using the added displacement to boost high-rpm power, Yamaha pumped up the bike's low-end and midrange poke. Compared to the 1100, this year's bike bristles with more power between 3000 and 6500 rpm; so much so, in fact, that within that rev range there's enough pure grunt to send the massive 150/80 rear tire slithering across the road like a fleeing diamondback. And for those of you who worship at the alter of high-rpm power, don't despair: None of the big Yamaha's top-end pull has gotten lost in the displacement shuffle. If you twist the FJ's engine past 6500 rpm, you'll be rewarded with an awe-inspiring rush, which peaks just beyond the bike's 9500-rpm redline.

Thanks to the FJ1200's stout midrange power, though, you rarely have to send the tach needle that high in daily use. Combined with that mid-rpm pull, the FJ offers generally good throttle response and enough flywheel effect to make the big engine easy to use whether you're threading though traffic or blitzing your favorite backroad. Unfortunately, this near-perfect behavior is blemished by blubbery carburetion below 2500 rpm, which keeps the FJ from exhibiting the kind of basement-level power possessed by bikes such as Suzuki's GS1150.



Broad saddle highlights FJ accommodations

Comfort and speed come together.

That low-speed burble could be found on the 1100, and so too could most of the FJ12's engine pieces. Boosting the FJ's displacement from 1097cc to 1188 turned out to be a straightforward operation: The FJ's bore is 3mm larger than before, and there are a handful of shift-mechanism changes to help handle the bike's increased power and to improve shifting. Even so, the FJ's five-speed gearbox feels notchy, and missing the one-two upshift under full throttle happens far too frequently.

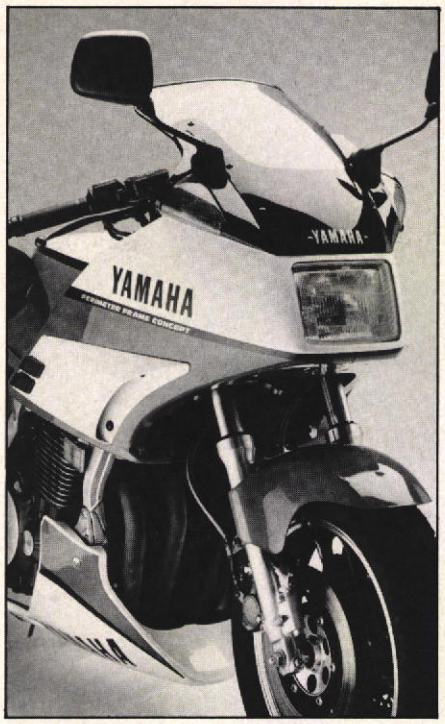
Otherwise, the few remaining changes for '86 are minor. For example, the same 36mm Mikuni carbs are in place, but they breathe through an airbox modified to help the FJ pass the tougher '86 noise-emission standards. For the same reason, the mufflers (now with a black instead of silver finish) have more sound-deadening glass-wool in them, and they are fed by single-wall stainless-steel head pipes (the 1100 used heavier double-wall pipes) that pare a claimed 3.7 pounds from the FJ's chassis.

Clearly, then, changes to the 16-valve inline-four motor aren't extensive, and neither are the alterations performed on the FJ's chassis. Instead of a wholesale reworking of the bike's running gear, Yamaha has attended to several details that more than anything else help the bike improve its wide-band competence.

To begin with, the FJ's fairing has been revamped with a lower and more steeply

raked windscreen. Yamaha's intentions were to reduce the amount of turbulence and consequent helmet buffeting the old bike inflicted. Riders 6 feet or taller will like the FJ12's new setup: The windscreen sends the windblast right to the tops of the shoulders, which puts the helmet in clean, non-turbulent air. Shorter riders, conversely, will feel short-changed, because the windblast strikes just at the lower faceshield edge of most helmets, which dramatically increases wind noise. Another change to the FJ's bodywork proves more successful, though: The fairing-mounted mirrors are placed at the ends of long, oval-section stalks, which lets the mirrors provide a useful, if not perfectly clear view of what's behind you—instead of a close-up of your sleeves.

Considering the kind of changes Yamaha made to the FJ1200, you might think the bike's mission profile has been loosened from that of a hard-core sportbike. That's not entirely the case, because the FJ still maintains plenty of peg-scraping personality. All it takes, really, to transform the FJ from freeway flier to backroad bomber is a twist of the suspension's adjusters. For a 190-pound rider, the bike works best with the spring and damping rates on the fork and shock set to their full-stiff settings. And out on a road with long, sweeping turns, the FJ fairly shines. There, the bike can use its plentiful power to jet it from corner to corner with the ferocity of an angered pit bull. In this environment, the FJ12 feels terrifically stable, and the suspension tracks over both washboard surfaces and potholes with aplomb.



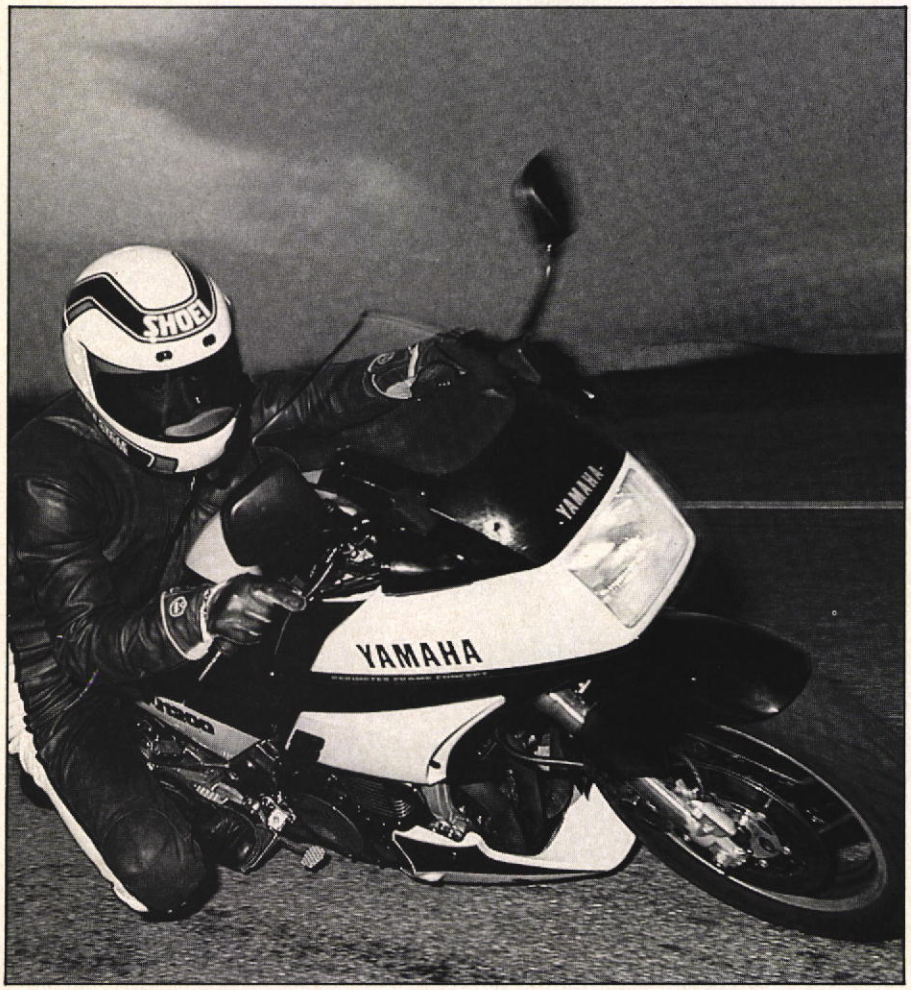
Raked shield is a curse to short riders

But new mirrors are a blessing to all.

When the road tightens, however, the FJ12 begins to lose some of its good manners. If you stick to a moderate, eight-tenths pace, the bike responds quickly and accurately to pressure at the bars, and it feels lighter than its 539 pounds might suggest. But as you begin to pick up the pace and try to hustle the FJ through quick side-to-side transitions, the steering response becomes more sluggish, and it takes far more pressure to drop the FJ into a turn. What's more, you'll have to maintain bar pressure to keep the bike heeled over; in general, the 1200 prefers you to pick a line and stick to it, rather than asking for mid-corner corrections. Exacerbating this trait, the big Yamaha strongly resists leaning into corners with the brakes on, which means it's best to get all your braking done before diving into the corner.

Once you've become accustomed to the Yamaha's steering, though, you can make the bike fairly fly. The huge Bridgestone tires help here: You can use every bit of the FJ's generous cornering clearance confident that the tires will do nothing untoward. That especially true of the front tire, because it not only keeps the front of the bike well planted, but it allows you to make the fullest use of the FJ's brakes. The 1200's front dual-disc setup uses the same calipers Yamaha employs on most of its sporting bikes, albeit with hydraulic anti-dives plumbed in. And therein lies the rub: The FJ's front brake proves strong and progressive, though it provides less feedback than Yamaha brakes not equipped with anti-dive mechanisms.

Away from the backroads, the FJ shows through a kind of brilliance that's all too rarely found in sporting hardware. For touring-bike-plush highway cruising, all you need to do is turn the fork's preload and damping adjusters to the lowest of their three positions, and set the rear suspension to No. 3 (of five) spring preload and damping. Set thus, the FJ glides over all manner of road irregularities without a hiccup. Better yet, the suspen-

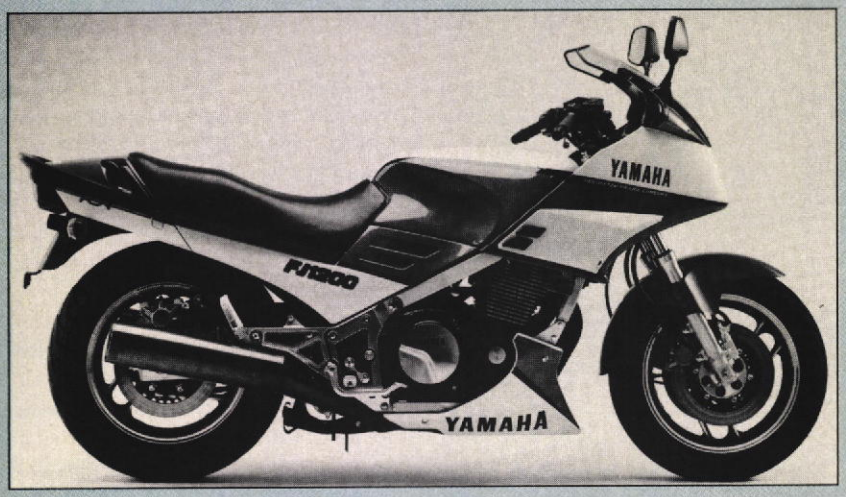


Big FJ seems as at home charging through the backroads as it does on the highway

With FJ's comfortable ergonomics and superb suspension, you'll enjoy it too.

Continued

CYCLE GUIDE SPECIFICATIONS



Yamaha FJ1200 — street

IMPORTER: Yamaha Motor Corp. U.S.A., 6555 Katella Ave., Cypress, California 90630

SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE: $5049

ENGINE

Type . . . . . four-stroke transverse vertical four
Valve arrangement . . . . . double overhead camshafts, four valves per cylinder
Bore and stroke . . . . . 77.0mm x 63.8mm
Displacement 1188.4cc
Compression ratio 9.7:1
Engine redline . . . . . 9500 rpm
Carburetion . . . . . four 36mm Mikuni constant-vacuum
Air filter . . . . . disposable paper element
Lubrication . . . . . wet sump
Starting system . . . . . electric only
Ignition . . . . . transistorized breakerless
Charging system . . . 12-volt; 360-watt alternator, voltage regulator/rectifier, 14-ampere-hour battery

DRIVETRAIN

Primary drive . . . straight-cut gears; 1.750:1 ratio
Clutch . . . . . wet, multi-plate
Final drive . . . . . #530 O-ring chain (5/8-in. pitch, 3/8-in. width); 2.412:1 (41/17) ratio

Gear	Internal gear ratio	Overall gear ratio	MPH per 1000 RPM
I	2.857	12.059	6.12
II	2.000	8.441	8.75
III	1.571	6.632	11.14
IV	1.292	5.452	13.55
V	1.115	4.708	15.69

SUSPENSION/WHEEL TRAVEL

Front . . . . . Kayaba, 41mm stanchion tube diameter, 3-position adjustable rebound damping, 3-postion adjustable spring preload, brake-actuated hydraulic anti-dive/5.7 in. (145mm)
Rear . . . . . single Yamaha shock, 17-position adjustable rebound damping, 13mm spring preload range/4.7 in. (120mm)

BRAKES

Front . . . . . dual double-action hydraulic calipers, 11.0-in. (280mm) effective disc diameter
Rear . . . . . double-action hydraulic caliper, 11.1-in. (281mm) effective disc diameter

TIRES

Front . . . . . 120/80V16 Bridgestone Exedra G533 tubeless
Rear . . . . . 150/80V16 Bridgestone Exedra G534 tubeless

DIMENSIONS AND CAPACITIES

Weight . . . . . 539 lbs. (244.5kg)
Weight distribution . . . . 49.0% front, 51.0% rear
Gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) . . . . 992 lbs. (450.0kg)
Load capacity (with full fuel tank) . . . . . 416 lbs. (188.7kg)
Wheelbase . . . 58.6 to 59.8 in. (1489 to 1520mm)
Seat height . . . . . 30.7 in. (780mm)
Handlebar width . . . . . 26.6 in. (675mm)
Footpeg height . . . . . 13.0 in. (330mm)
Ground clearance . . . . . 5.3 in. (135mm), at exhaust crossover
Steering head angle . . . 27.5 degrees from vertical
Front wheel trail . . . . . 4.41 in. (112mm)
Frame . . . . . full perimiter, round- and box-section mild steel tubing
Oil capacity . . . . . 4.4 qt. (4.2*l*)
Fuel tank . . . . . steel, 5.9 gal. (22.3*l*), including 0.9 gal. (3.5 *l*) reserve
Instrumentation . . . . . speedometer, odometer, tripmeter resettable to zero, tachometer, fuel gauge, LCD digital clock

PERFORMANCE

Fuel consumption range . . . . . 32 to 43 mpg (14 to 18 km/*l*)
Average fuel consumption . . . . . 39 mpg (17 km/*l*)
Cruising range, maximum . . . . . 189 to 254 miles (304 to 409km)
Cruising range, reserve only . . . . . 29 to 39 miles (47 to 63km)
Speedometer error, 30 mph ind. . . 28 mph actual
Speedometer error, 55 mph ind. . . 51 mph actual
Best 1/4-mile acceleration . . . . . 10.851 sec., 127.47 mph (205 kph)
Top speed (observed) . . . . . 147 mph (237 kph)
Stopping distance from 30 mph . . . . . 30 ft. (9.1m)
Stopping distance from 60 mph . . . 132 ft. (40.2m)

WARRANTY: 12 months, unlimited mileage

AVAILABLE COLOR: Silky White/Stormy Red

All weights and measurements are taken with machine unladen and fuel tank empty.
Specifications refer to a 49-state model.

sion is as compliant as fresh bread and able to handle wheel-swallowing potholes without bottomingly harshly.

The FJ combines that supple suspension with a broad, roomy seat and a seating position that very nicely splits the difference between racer crouch and standard-model sit-up. In fact, with those attributes, the FJ1200 can be considered the ultimate bare-bones sport-touring mount: The fairing does a good job fending off the wind, the ergonomics virtually invite you to a day on the road and the 5.9-gallon tank gives the big FJ a useful range of more than 200 miles. One strike against the FJ's touring competence is the engine's buzzy nature. Throughout its rev range, the rubber-mounted inline pours out a fair amount of high-frequency vibration, which causes the feet and hands to nod off after an hour or so on board.

That buzziness is evident around town, too, but it's far less annoying there. Otherwise, the FJ proves to be an exemplary urban-trolling device. It's low seat height, smooth clutch and abundant power make city-bound travel a genuine pleasure. Because the power delivery isn't instantaneous right off idle, you rarely find yourself with more throttle or power than you bargained for. Generally, the FJ is uncommonly docile and tractable for a motorcycle with the 1200's kind of speed potential.

Ultimately, it's the FJ1200 all-purpose competence that keeps it afloat in the torrential waters of the literbike class. Otherwise, both of Kawasaki's Ninjas and Suzuki's GSX-R1100 put the Yamaha clean onto the trailer when it comes to pure, no-holds-barred performance. But when you talk about day-to-day life with the FJ1200, every other racer-pretender takes a back seat—*every one.* So be warned: If you're looking for the ultimate in big-inch sporting hardware, you might find the FJ less than ideal. But if you want a bike you can ride for hours—over winding backroad or dead-straight four-lane—that leaves you with an unabashed smile, there's no other game in town. •

Nits:

- Rear suspension adjuster is difficult to reach and requires a 14mm wrench to adjust.
- Bungee hooks are too close to saddle and too far back.

Picks:

- Fairing-mounted clock is handy.
- Fuel-reserve switch is conveniently located on left side of fairing inner panel.
- Remote headlight-angle adjuster is useful and convenient.

Ride Review

• The FJ1200 has been masquerading long enough. It's *not* a sportbike. Sure, its full fairing and racy lines trick you into believing this liter-plus bike is a member of the sporting elite, but don't be fooled. Take away the ostentatious makeup, and the FJ1200 is nothing more than your basic do-everything streetbike.

That's to be taken as a compliment, too. In a time when swoopy sportbikes, custom cruisers, turn-key touring rigs and high-horsepower hot-rods have taken over the market—and our highways—the industry has somehow forgotten the no-nonsense streetbike. But through evolution, the FJ1200 emerged as the leading figurehead of how today's streetbike should perform.

As for the FJ's sporty styling, think of it as icing on the cake. A cake practically every street-wise rider can enjoy, too.

—Dain Gingerelli

• Riding Yamaha's FJ1200 brought back fond memories of riding equipment in the old 1000cc AMA Superbike class—all that torque and horsepower, what fun. And I found that the FJ, like my old racers, didn't like to be ridden slow—it had a tendency to fall into turns. The FJ1200 also has a low center of gravity, which is good for handling, but with the FJ you pay for it with cornering clearance.

The FJ's too low in another way: I found that I had to bend over too far to reach the controls, and this old back of mine didn't like that for very long. That's made worse by the engine's vibration, which at a constant rpm makes the handlebars buzz my hands to sleep. So in more than one way, the FJ1200 reminds me of the big-bore Superbikes: It has its faults, but once you twist the throttle, all is forgiven.

—Wes Cooley

• Remember that girlfriend you had in high school, the good-looking one with long blond hair, a rich daddy and the Corvette she'd let you drive? Remember how you liked just about everything about her—except her laugh, a shrill, teeth-jarring shriek that made the hair on the back of your neck stand up? And how that laugh was finally the last straw?

Well, that's how I feel about the FJ1200. It's hard not to like a bike with the FJ's abundant power, compliant suspension and sensible ergonomics—it's hard, but I can manage it. Because the FJ's annoying tendency to stand up during mid-corner braking completely negates the advantages of my late-braking style of riding. And as good a bike as it is in most other circumstances, that one handling quirk is enough to send me in search of the bike that suits me to a K—the 1000R Ninja.

—Jerry Smith

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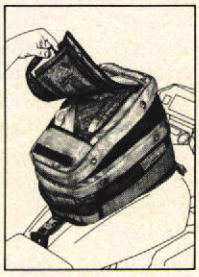

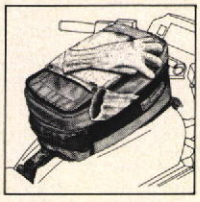

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The unique **three-point mounting harness** (patented) keeps your Sportpack secure, and permits easy mounting and removal. And, the nonporous **neoprene pad** helps protect your bike's finish.

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PRODUCT EVALUATION:

Full Bore Speed Series Boots

The finishing touch for your moto-ensemble.

• Motorcycle apparel has become fashion conscious to a point that would make Brooke Shields blush. For most sportbikes you can get fully coordinated riding gear—including leathers, helmets, gloves and boots. A good example of designer riding apparel is Full Bore's new Speed Series street boot, which offers the fashion-conscious rider five different tri-color designs in addition to black.

Full Bore's boots are more than mere fashion statements, though. Imported from Italian bootmaker Gaspo, the cowhide boots feature double-layer shift pads and an extra layer of leather at the heel. In addition, all stress-bearing seams are double-stitched. And to make the boots easy to get into, the zipper runs from the cuff nearly to the sole. Occasionally, though, the zipper hangs up if the teeth aren't perfectly aligned.

In use, the boots feel like a cross between a lightweight racing boot and a heavier touring boot. The Full Bore's construction helps provide foot and ankle support without feeling like a plaster cast. At the same time, though, the leather itself is supple and lets the Speed Series boot feel as comfortable as an old pair of Calvin's.

That light feel lets the boots excel as functional sport-riding gear. The Full Bores offer both good control feel and the kind of flexibility that's mandatory for a torrid backroad attack. Plus, the leather around the ankle is flexible and the boots leave enough room so that they don't restrict ankle movement when you're hanging off.

The soles absorb vibration effectively, and the ribbed design provides traction even in the wet. The Speed Series boots survived a thorough dousing without leaking a drop of water, and the lining keeps your feet warm as well as dry.

And unlike some items of high fashion, the Speed Series boots don't command an exorbitant price: The Full

PHOTOGRAPHY © 1986 VIC HUBER

Bores are priced about average for high-quality road boots, and they are the equal of most in terms of performance. So if nothing but coordinated riding gear gets between you and your sportbike, Full Bore's Speed Series boots could be the perfect addition to your ensemble.

—Marc Cook

Full Bore Speed Series boots
Importer: Full Bore Motorcycle Products, 9592A Baltimore Blvd., Dept. CG, College Park, Maryland 20740
Suggested retail price: $119.95
Sizes: 7–13
Colors: black, dark blue/white/light blue, blue/white/red, dark gray/light gray/red, black/gray/red, light gray/blue/red

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Introducing new Cycle LOK—a compact, folding security system that works on any cycle. Anywhere.
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Lock up your bike with new Cycle LOK—available only at your local authorized Yamaha dealer.
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This is the same **Carrera** helmet that retails for $129. and has been featured in many enthusiast magazines such as *Cycle, Cycle World, Rider, Hot Bike,* and *Motorcyclist* and has been referred to as one of **"the latest and trickest...quality German craftsmanship and engineering."** Some of its features are found only on helmets at twice the price.

NEWPORT BEACH, CALIFORNIA During a limited time, the incomparable style and prestige of the internationally famous **Carrera Le Mans** helmet, one of Germany's finest is finally being offered to the American public in this exclusive promotional campaign — **not** for its $129. retail price—but for an amazing **$69* each!**

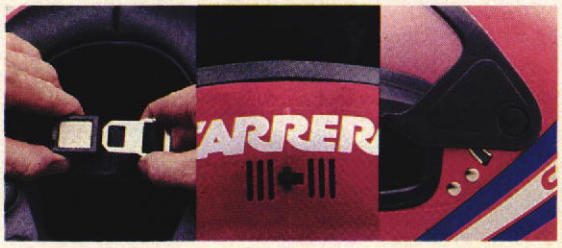
HOW IS THIS POSSIBLE?

For years our company has searched the world over for the best helmet values and have now entered into an exclusive agreement with **Germany's leading helmet** producer to buy and market the entire U.S.-bound **Carrera** inventory in an effort to gain a "foothold" in the huge North American motorcycle helmet market. Because we are selling direct, there is **no middleman mark-up.** And, since we're dealing in volume, we can pass along a tremendous savings to you. But remember, **this offer won't last forever.**

IS IT GOOD?

This helmet reflects the precision German craftsmanship that's made the name **Carrera** synonymous with high quality. Anatomically designed and wind tunnel tested, the **Carrera Le Mans** helmet has been popular with the European motorcycle racing community for some time. The popular **Carrera** is made from one of the "new" synthetics called Polyamide Nylon (superior to Polycarbonate) — a rugged material that's impervious to the effects of gas, brake fluid, solvents or cleaners. Each helmet carries a *full one-year warranty.*

The **Carrera** helmet features an **anti-scratch face shield** (an optional, extra cost item on most other helmets) and patented **Magnetic-track shield closure system,** for greater rider comfort. An adjustable front-to-rear **air ventilation system** and a patented **quick-release chin strap mechanism** that operates with or without gloves on. All this, **plus** vivid contrasting **Carrera Graphics** and plush **brushed-nylon** interior with padded neck roll for secure fit.



Quick Release Buckle | Flow-Thru Ventillation | Magnetic Shield Mechanism

JUST HOW GOOD?

Weighing less than many open-faced helmets, the **Carrera Le Mans** is certified to meet or exceed tough U.S. and International government safety standards, including **S.H.C.A.** and **D.O.T.** requirements. It's fully approved for use in **A.M.A.-sanctioned motorcycle competition events.**

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These new **Carrera Le Mans** helmets will not be sold at these prices by this company in any store. To order one, select your size from the chart below, choose color(s) (black, red, white), then write us directly or call our **Toll-Free Hotline** (have your credit card ready).

Carrera Sizing Chart	
Head Measure	Helmet Size
21¼" – 21⅝"	Small
22" – 22½"	Medium
22¾" – 23¼"	Large
23½" – 24⅛"	X-Large

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*These special prices good only thru October 31, 1986.

ROAD TEST:

Kawasaki Voyager XII

Deep-sixing the bigger-is-better image.

BY MARC COOK

Kawasaki is out to change its image in the eyes of touring riders. The firm's previous attempt at full-boat perfection, the six-cylinder, 877-pound ZN1300 Voyager, turned out to be everything touring riders wanted in a long-distance mount, and more. A lot more. The bike's extravagant load of standard equipment—ranging from electronic fuel-injection to an LCD compass—came from Kawasaki's desire to have the biggest, most feature-laden turn-key on the road. And in that respect, Kawasaki succeeded, because the ZN1300 hit the Interstates with an unprecedented list of standard features, as well as unprecedented size, heft and complexity. But in the end, the ZN1300 was more hobbled than helped by its incredible load of electronic, pneumatic and mechanical conveniences, and as a result, the bike as a whole proved to be less than the sum of its parts.

But for 1986, Kawasaki has pulled an engineering about-face and has marched out the Voyager XII—an all-new clipper ship that shares little more than name with its behemoth brother. Not surprisingly, one of the

Continued

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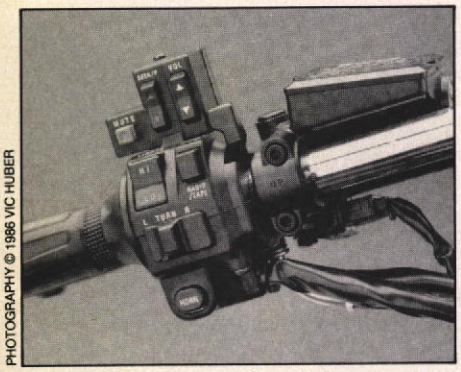
CYCLE GUIDE
Kawasaki
Kawasaki

primary goals for the XII was light weight, and to that end, Kawasaki left off many of the big brother's doodads and frills. For instance, the 1300's LCD instrumentation has given way to a set of handsome and functional analog gauges, and the ZN13's air-adjustable suspension with on-board air compressor has been replaced by a pair of fairing-mounted Schrader valves. This paring down of electrickery helps lower both the bike's weight and its sticker price. At 732 pounds, the XII is lighter than every other full-dresser except BMW's featherweight K100RT—and a whopping 145 pounds lighter than the 1300. And by limiting the Voyager's list of accessories, Kawasaki can offer the bike for $7399, $900 less than its stablemate and almost $1000 under an '86 Aspencade.

And while the Voyager might seem lacking in sheer features as compared to the 1300, Kawasaki didn't skimp on the XII's engine performance. Instead of re-



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Left-side cluster holds radio switches

Digital control at your fingertips.

hashing the ZN1300's six-cylinder engine, the XII got an all-new 1196.5cc inline-four. And with that engine—combined with the Kawasaki's light weight—the new Voyager joins the Yamaha Venture and BMW K100RT in the small fraternity of turnpike hot-rods. But unlike those two, the Kawasaki makes its best power well into its rev range: Below 3000 rpm, the Voyager provides adequate, though not impressive, power. Once spinning above that speed, however, the 16-valve engine comes alive, charging ahead like the bull in a Schlitz commercial. Those impressions are backed up during top-gear roll-ons, too: From 60 mph, the Kawasaki immediately falls several bike-lengths behind a Venture Royale, though the Kawasaki begins to make up ground once the engine gets into its upper-mid-range power surge.

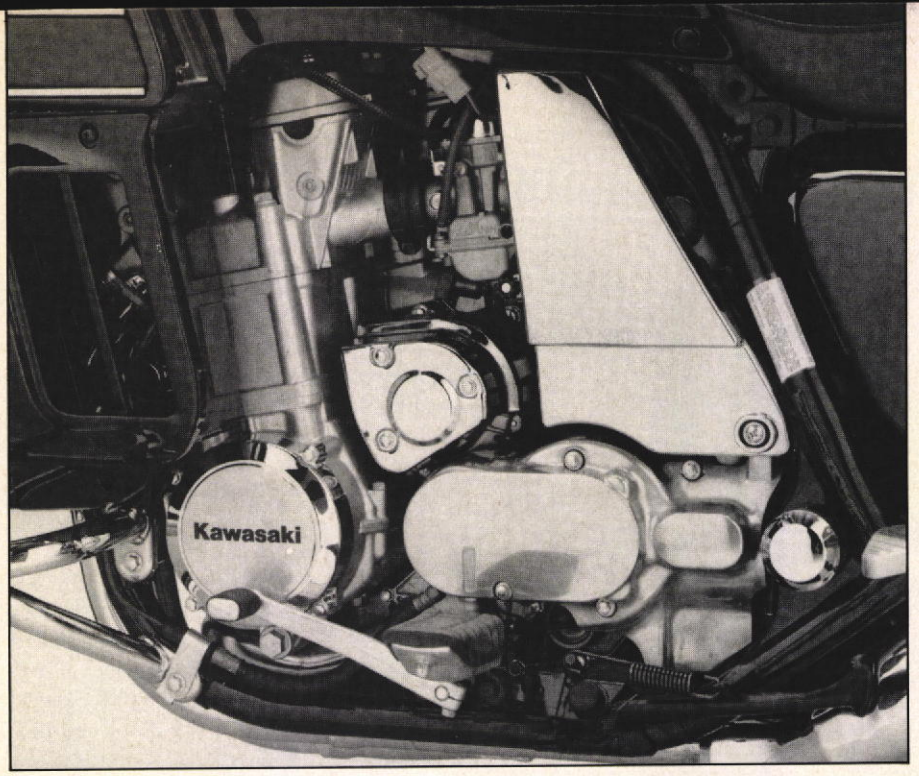
But the Voyager's top-gear acceleration is blunted more by its exceptionally tall gearing than by a shortage of horsepower. At an indicated 60 mph, for instance, the motor is spinning a leisurely 2800 rpm. Kawasaki wanted that style of tall gearing to help make the engine seem less frenetic at highway speeds. The XII's engine feels unobtrusive on the open road for another reason, too. Thanks to six rubber engine mounts and a pair of gear-driven counterbalancers, the XII's motor is almost eerily smooth and as civilized as an English butler.

That style of smoothness—and performance—comes from an engine that shares technology found in Kawasaki's four-cylinder Ninjas. In a addition to its general 16-valve, DOHC layout, the Voyager's motor uses semi-flat-slide Keihin carburetors, similar to those on the Ninja 1000R—although the touring bike's mixers are 30mm instead of the R's 36s. Also in Ninja fashion, the XII's alternator resides behind the cylinder bank to help reduce engine width. Moreover, the general configuration of the Voyager's four-valve combustion chambers follows the Ninjas' lead, as does its relatively high 10.0:1 compression ratio.

One departure from Ninja practice is the XII's use of hydraulic valve-lash adjusters. Like the setup found in the vee-twin Vulcan, the Voyager's two camshafts actuate rocker arms that pivot on hydraulic lash adjusters. Kawasaki says this system eliminates the need for valve-lash adjustment and reduces mechanical noise.

While the Voyager's engine used the Ninja as a role model, the bike's chassis took its cues from another bike: the Honda Gold Wing. In such critical dimensions as wheel and tire size, wheelbase, steering head angle and front-wheel trail, the Kawasaki comes so close to the Honda that you might think they're from the same family tree. Given that, it's no suprise that the Kawasaki *feels* much like the Honda out on the open road. The Voyager seems light and agile, especially so for a 732-pound touring bike, and, also like the

© 1986 DAVID DEWHURST



Liquid-cooled four-cylinder motor borrows technology from another Kawasaki

With its high-winding power, there's more Ninja here than looks suggest.

Honda, the XII feels more compact than its actual dimensions suggest. Even so, there are subtle differences between the handling of the two bikes: For instance, the Kawasaki's steering responds a hair slower than the Honda's, and as a result, the XII is slightly more stable and resistant to crosswinds than the Honda. Overall, though, the XII possesses a near-ideal mix of agility and stability, making the bike feel light yet reassuring.

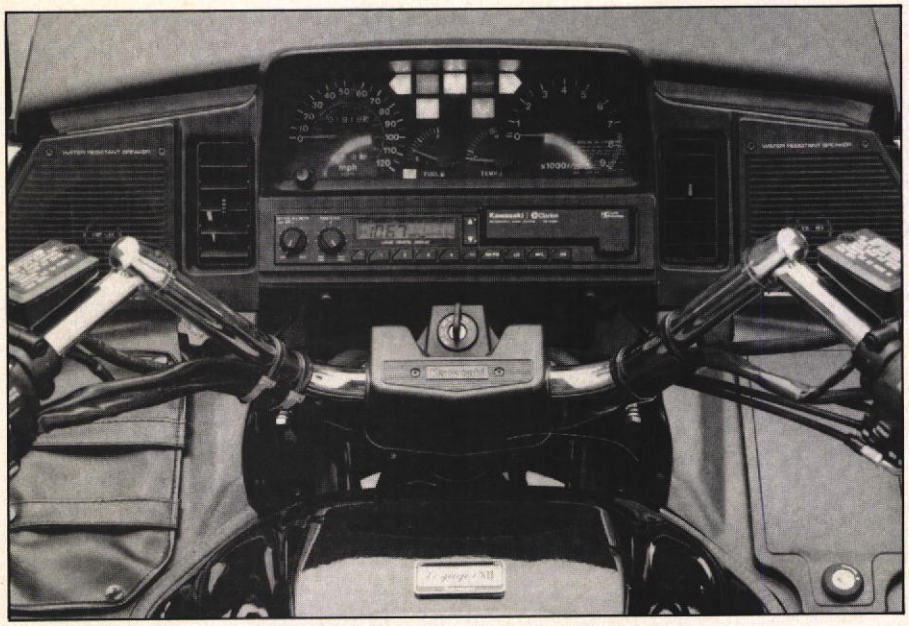
The Voyager's fairing and luggage also seem to be patterned after the Wing's. And considering that the GL's package is one of the best in the business, that's no bad thing. With the fairing, in particular, Kawasaki has done an admirable job: There's little helmet buffeting at highway speeds—with the adjustable windscreen in its lowest position—and the fairing successfully keeps the windblast off the rider's arms and torso. And although it stops short of fully protecting the rider's feet—cold weather can leave you wishing you'd packed a pair of electric socks—the fairing's level of coverage is otherwise excellent. In addition to wrapping you in a cocoon of comfort, the fairing provides the kind of easy-access storage—with a tonneau-covered compartment on the left and a lockable bin on the right—that makes touring life easier.

That thorough approach to long-haul travel also is reflected by the bike's ergonomics. To begin with, the Voyager's saddle is not only as comfortable as a custom-tailored suit, but it's fully adjustable. The rider's backrest—also the passenger's saddle—can be adjusted through a 60mm range. Finally, the tail-trunk can be moved fore-and-aft to any of four positions. There is one fly in the Voyager's ointment, though; for some riders, the footpegs are positioned too far forward, causing pain in the feet and legs after only a short time. Ironically, the footpegs are one of the few things you *can't* adjust on the Voyager.

While those problems might seem minor, the Voyager's luggage has more serious shortcomings. Despite seeming carbon copies of the Gold Wing's bags, right down to external size, shape and full-width light bar on the travel-trunk, the fit and construction of the XII's luggage aren't up to par. The latches, for example, are sometimes difficult to secure, and the backing plates aren't particularly robust. Further, the non-locking compartments on the saddlebag lids, while handy, eat up a substantial amount of interior room. And finally, the saddlebag seals aren't as effective as on some other touring bikes, and the bags will leak unless they're carefully closed.

But even those miscues can't take away from the Voyager XII's open-road prowess. When the road continues straight ahead as though drawn by God's own straightedge, you'll find the XII right at home. For starters, the suspension does its share by ironing out most of what the road sends your way. Initially, the fork seems to have an abundance of seal friction, and although it broke in after the first 1000 miles, a slight harshness remains. For a 190-pound rider and a full load of gear, the Voyager preferred 7 psi pumped into the fork (5.7–8.5-psi range) and 30 psi in the twin shocks (27–36-psi range). Set accordingly, the XII responds to sharp jabs and expansion joints fluidly yet without the mushy feeling some touring bikes make you live with to get this style of compliance.

Even with its straightline comfort, the Voyager isn't a one-act play in terms of touring duty; it can also hoof it down a backroad as though more of the Ninja personality remains than Kawasaki is letting on. Granted, much of the bike's eye-opening backroad behavior can be credited to the engine, because the motor provides a satisfying amount of *go* when you want to

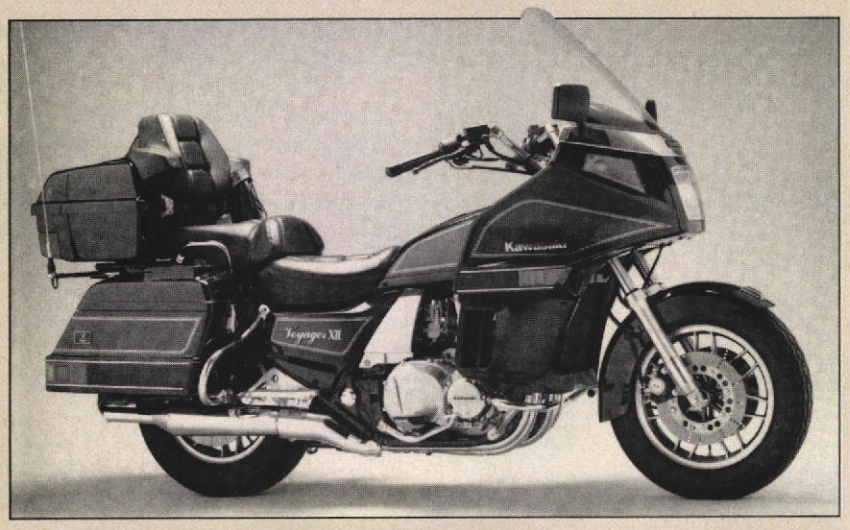


Simple analog instruments replace ZN1300's Tokyo-by-night digitals

Cleaning up the control room of Kawasaki newest freeway flyer.

Continued

CYCLE GUIDE SPECIFICATIONS



Kawasaki Voyager XII — touring

IMPORTER: Kawasakai Motors Corp., 2009 E. Edinger Ave., Santa Ana, California 92711

SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE: $7399

ENGINE

Type	liquid-cooled four stroke transverse vertical four
Valve arrangement	double overhead camshafts, four valves per cylinder
Bore and stroke	78.0mm x 62.6mm
Displacement	1196.5cc
Compression ratio	10.0:1
Engine redline	7500 rpm
Carburetion	four 30mm Keihin semi-flat-slide constant-vacuum
Air filter	disposable paper element
Lubrication	wet sump
Starting system	electric only
Ignition	transistorized breakerless
Charging system	12-volt; 460-watt alternator, voltage regulator/rectifier, 20-ampere-hour battery

DRIVETRAIN

Primary drive	straight-cut gears; 1.706:1 ratio
Clutch	wet, multi-plate
Transmission-to-driveshaft drive	spiral-bevel gears; 0.681:1 ratio
Driveshaft-to-rear-wheel drive	spiral-bevel gears; 3.555:1 ratio

Gear	Internal gear ratio	Overall gear ratio	MPH per 1000 RPM
I	2.733	11.310	6.54
II	1.800	7.448	9.93
III	1.333	5.517	13.41
IV	1.035	4.285	17.27
V	0.838	3.470	21.32

SUSPENSION/WHEEL TRAVEL

Front	Showa air-spring, 41mm stanchion tube diameter/5.2 in. (133mm)
Rear	dual Kayaba air-spring shocks, 4-position adjustable rebound damping/3.6 in. (92mm)

BRAKES

Front	dual single-action hydraulic calipers, 10.9-in. (278mm) effective disc diameter
Rear	single-action hydraulic caliper, 11.3-in. (288mm) effective disc diameter

TIRES

Front	130/90-16 67H Dunlop Gold Seal F21 tubeless
Rear	150/90-15 74H Dunlop K425A tubeless

DIMENSIONS AND CAPACITIES

Weight	732 lbs. (332.0kg)
Weight distribution	44.7% front, 55.3% rear
Gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR)	1210 lbs. (548.9kg)
Load capacity (with full fuel tank)	440 lbs. (199.6kg)
Wheelbase	64.1 in. (1627mm)
Seat height	30.0 in. (763mm)
Handlebar width	31.8 in. (808mm)
Footpeg height	8.4 in. (213mm)
Ground clearance	5.3 in. (134mm), at exhaust heat shield
Steering head angle	30.0 degrees from vertical
Front wheel trail	4.76 in. (121mm)
Frame	tubular mild-steel, double front downtubes
Oil capacity	4.4 qt. (4.0/)
Fuel tank	steel, 6.1 gal. (23.2/), no reserve
Instrumentation	speedometer, odometer, tripmeter resettable to zero, tachometer, coolant temperature gauge, fuel gauge, LCD clock/ radio-frequency readout

PERFORMANCE

Fuel consumption range	30 to 46 mpg (13 to 19 km/l)
Average fuel consumption	42 mpg (18 km/l)
Cruising range, maximum	183 to 281 miles (295 to 452km)
Speedometer error, 30 mph ind.	32 mph actual
Speedometer error, 55 mph ind.	52 mph actual
Best 1/4-mile acceleration	13.015 sec., 101.01 mph (163 kph)
Top speed (indicated)	125 mph (201 kph)
Stopping distance from 30 mph	31 ft. (9.4m)
Stopping distance from 60 mph	126 ft. (38.4m)

WARRANTY: 24 months, unlimited mileage

AVAILABLE COLORS: Luminous Red/ Luminous Dark Red

All weights and measurements are taken with machine unladen and fuel tank empty.
Specifications refer to a California-only model.

hustle. Moreover, the XII's neutral steering and superb, non-integrated brakes make it feel more willing to tackle a set of twisties than do many other touring rigs. Only a relative shortage of cornering clearance—and the fact that the exhaust shields graze the tarmac almost immediately after the footpegs—suggest the XII is out of its element on backroads.

Should you be confined to the Interstates, though, you'll find the Kawasaki's Clarion cassette stereo nothing short of delightful. Both the cassette deck—which includes an auto-reverse function and metal-tape capability—and the tuner section work flawlessly, although some of the controls—the tape fast-forward and rewind, especially—are too small to be manipulated easily while wearing thick gloves. On the other hand, Kawasaki has taken moto-stereo one step further with a handlebar-mounted volume, up/down signal seek and cassette/ radio controls. While Harley-Davidson pioneered the switchpod-mounted volume and radio controls, Kawasaki offers a more sophisticated version, with an electronic, rather than mechanical, volume control. Additionally, the Clarion radio incorporates a speed-sensitive auto-volume control, although with the remote volume control, the auto feature seems somewhat redundant.

On the whole, the Voyager XII's high-tech radio reflects Kawasaki's attitude with its new Voyager. Because with the XII, Kawasaki pulled back from the more-is-better philosophy of the 1300, and concentrated on making the Voyager's touring features more *functional.* It's obvious that the engineers spent more development time perfecting the Voyager XII's ergonomics, engine and suspension than deciding where to put the LCD barometer. More important, perhaps, is that the Voyager XII provides rolling proof that a touring bike doesn't have to be burdened with a truckload of gadgets and gimmicks—as was the ZN1300—to make the grade in the touring class. •

Nits:

- Fuel gauge is inaccurate and non-linear.
- Overdrive indicator is too bright and produces glare on the instruments at night.
- Oil filler hidden behind a sidecover that requires a screwdriver for removal.

Picks:

- Handlebars feature functional adjustments.
- Saddlebags can be detached quickly and easily.
- Double-action centerstand is easy to deploy.

Ride Review

• I liked the six-cylinder Voyager about as much as Superman likes Kryptonite. The ZN1300 was so heavy that once I dropped it off the sidestand and had to use my car's bumper jack to get it back on its wheels. It was so big you really needed the on-board digital compass to find your way around it. And I still have nightmares about bulldogging Moby Bike through drenching rain and killer sidewinds for 400 miles one day during our recent Tour-Off.

Now I'm losing even more sleep over Kawasaki's new Voyager XII, but for a different reason: The four-cylinder XII is so downright appealing I don't want to stop riding it. In fact, it's so good compared to its predecessor I'm afraid I might be dreaming. But if I *am*, don't wake me up—because I'm dreaming of a warm, bright Saturday morning, the keys to the XII in my hand and the whole weekend ahead of me. *—Jerry Smith*

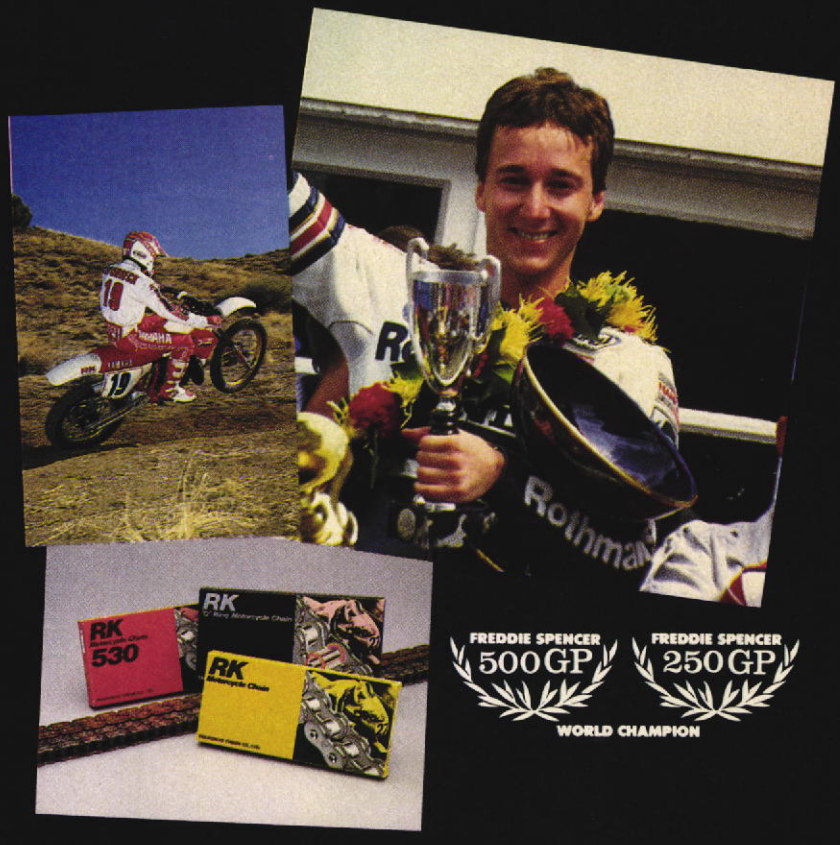
• In today's world, slim and small is *the* aim: compact discs, economy cars, mini-televisions. And manufacturers pare down every ounce on a motorcycle for quickness and speed. Touring bike designers seem to go into an entirely different mode: Add as many doodads and gizmos as possible to an already large bike, so it ends up looking like a Weight Watchers deserter after a bulimic binge.

My first impression of the Voyager XII had the bike tipping the scales in that direction. Kawasaki fooled me. This tourer looks nearly as enormous as the KZ1300, but the XII trims away enough of the former's excesses for a balance of performance and accessories that's top notch. It changed my mind about one thing: Good things also come in *big* packages. *—Tim Brodd*

• I never realized how little I thought of the Voyager 1300 until I rode the new XII and thought what a great first effort it was. Somehow, the original six seemed so far off the mark that I not only didn't consider it a serious effort, I didn't consider it *at all*. The basic package was so off-base that all the goodies packed into the 1300 struck me as something akin to a luxury-equipped Checker Marathon.

But it's obvious that Kawasaki was thinking about it, because the lessons it learned from the 1300 have been put to good use with the Voyager XII. This is one helluva nice touring bike; one that I wouldn't mind stashing in my garage. Better yet, it's one I wouldn't mind pulling out of my garage and using to chase a few sunsets. And that's a lot more than I can say about the original. *—Jim Miller*

Motorcycle RK Chain Racing



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TRAIL TEST:

Honda XR250R

A new way to thump the competition.

BY DAVID DEWHURST

PHOTOGRAPHY © 1986 DAVID DEWHURST

All right, listen up: Honda wants to get a few things straight. For a start, the folks in Japan want everyone to know that two-strokes don't have an exclusive contract on enduro trophies. Second, the engineers want you folks to realize that competitive four-strokes don't have to be fire-breathing monsters of Cadillac proportions. And the single piece of evidence to prove their point is the all-new XR250R.

And before you roll your eyes back and snicker behind your KDX200 manuals, take another look at the XR. It might look more cute than serious and that timid exhaust note might sound like something from a sewing machine, but the 250 is designed as a go-for-gold enduro bike and not just another playbike thumper.

American Honda considers the XR250R as "... the most serious enduro bike Honda's ever built" and sees it as direct competition for the ever-popular KDX200. Before they could make such claims, the designers had to do a lot of work to the two-year-old four-valve 250 motor. The biggest change was to increase the stroke 3mm to 59.5mm and reduce the bore 2mm to 73mm "... to make it feel more like people expect a four-stroke to feel." And if you expect the still over-square thumper to feel more torquey than the old 250, you won't be disappointed. The bore/stroke change also increases the amount of intake vacuum generated at low rpm, which reduced the need for the old two-carb design with its small venturi for low-speed operation and a larger carb for high-speed running. The single 30mm Keihin is also lighter and less complex than the dual system, and is easier to jet accurately.

The single-carb system also called for a new cylinder head with a single intake port, but with the same valves and cam as the old 250. Because of the bore change and slightly different exhaust pipes, however, the new head is not interchangeable with the old XR250's. The rest of the motor, though, is virtually unchanged with the exception of the oiling system. Honda learned from the overheating problems that plagued the XR350, and fitted the wet-sump 250 with a dual oiling system. One half forces oil around the motor, while the other pumps hot oil through steel lines to a tiny oil-cooler mounted on the steering stem.

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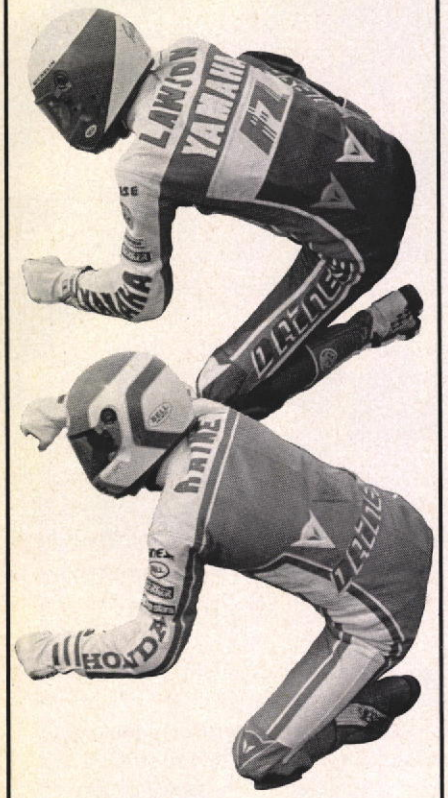

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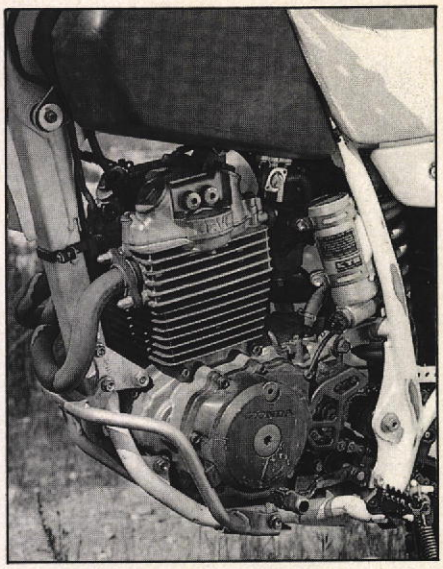

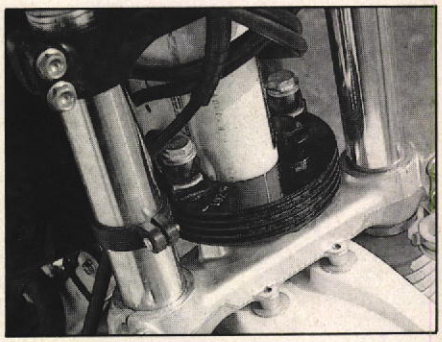

After one fast ride, it's easy to see that the XR250R would probably turn to molten metal without its extra cooling. The motor still gets hot, but never protests no matter how high you scream it. And scream it you will. Despite its torquier powerband, the XR still has a definite step in the powercurve as the revs rise, and fast time can be made with a big handful of throttle. There's not enough power to rip tree roots from the ground or, for that matter, beat a KDX200 in a drag race, but the little Honda is definitely fast enough to keep most 'A' riders right on time.

Gross horsepower isn't always what you need in an enduro, anyway; often it's more important to have plenty of torque when things get tough. The XR has just what you want coupled with enough flywheel to keep things rolling when some two-strokes just start spinning their wheels. The XR also has an advantage on rough and slick downhills because the motor's inertia reduces rear wheel lock up under braking.

Honda's also developed the slickest-shifting gearbox and the lightest and nicest clutch in the enduro world, both of which make the XR250R much easier to live with in the woods. Still, what the Honda makes up for in convenience and ease of use, it loses in sheer power to the KDX and other two-strokes. That difference is most noticeable over more open trails; while the XR will always keep up, you might want to find a little extra horsepower if you're going for gold.

Victory certainly won't be hampered by the XR's chassis, which is all-new from the tires up. Most noticeable of those changes is the the new 18-inch rear wheel replacing the old 17-incher. The XR's understuffed seat is a little taller because of this change, but the 250 can now be shod with the best enduro rubber that wasn't available in the 17-inch sizes. The rest of the chassis takes racing more seriously, too, with a little more rake and trail added to improve high-speed stability. The swingarm is also upgraded to an aluminum unit that is both stronger and lighter than the old steel part.

All this new hardware is kept in contact with the forest floor by a highly adjustable suspension system that's descended directly from Honda's motocross machinery. The rear shock has rebound damping adjustment on the main shock body with a compression adjuster on the remote reservoir. The new 41mm air-adjustable fork also has compression-damping adjustments in the bottom of each slider. With all these bells and whistles, you'd expect a perfect setting for almost any enduro situation. There isn't.

In slow sections and over small rocks, the XR250 glides easily, and everything seems as serene as a slow-motion action replay. But over the first big rock or high-speed dip you are jarred back to reality. The XR250R is softly sprung. But it's not just at higher speed that the springs wimp out. The XR squats enough to eat up significant ground clearance, and even lighter riders noticed rocks and logs cracking against the Honda's tubular engine guards.

Luckily, a suspension fix is a simple as new springs for the fork and shock, which would let you explore the XR's full potential. There's lots of potential to delve into, because Honda has designed a chassis that steers with the precision of a laser-guided missile. At low speed, it's as nimble as a mountain goat, and magically conceals the 25-pound weight disadvantage the XR has over two-strokes such as the KDX200. The Honda's as competent at high speeds as it is at low, and seems to have inherited the fire-roading skills that have made the XR350 so popular. Even with its soft suspension, the 250 cuts through turns as if the front tire was covered in Velcro.

Continued

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The XR's fine handling certainly helps to make up for the motor's lack of rip-snorting horsepower when the trail widens out. The Honda can be pushed deep into turns, and when things get out of hand, a powerful disc front brake and a strong rear drum get everything back in control. In fact, you can push the XR right up to its limit and hold it there all day long without it biting you back unexpectedly.

But while the XR250 can leave you with an ear-to-ear grin, it also can leave a nagging feeling that you could have handled a bike with a little extra. In this case, that extra is horsepower. Because right now the XR probably does not have enough to topple the KDX or the 250 Husky from the top of the 250-class enduro totem pole. But it certainly comes closer than any four-stroke that's come before it. So listen up, America. Honda might not have proved that thumpers can, after all, take home the gold. But it's close—real close. •

	HONDA XR250R	HONDA XR200R
Importer:	American Honda Motor Co. Inc., 100 W. Alondra Ave., Gardena, California 90247	American Honda Motor Co. Inc., 100 W. Alondra Ave., Gardena, California 90247
Category	Enduro	Enduro
Suggested retail price	$2198	$1748
Engine type	four-stroke vertical single	four-stroke vertical single
Valve arrangement	single overhead camshaft, four valves per cylinder	single overhead camshaft, two valves per cylinder
Bore and stroke	73.0mm x 59.5mm	65.5mm x 57.8mm
Displacement	249.0cc	194.8cc
Compression ratio	10.2:1	10.0:1
Carburetion	one 30mm Keihin slide/needle	one 26mm Keihin slide/needle
Gearbox	6-speed	6-speed
Front suspension/wheel travel	Showa air-spring, 41mm stanchion tube diameter/10.4 in. (263mm)	Kayaba air-spring, 36mm stanchion tube diameter/9.4 in. (240mm)
Rear shock/wheel travel	Showa, 16-position adjustable compression damping, 4-position adjustable rebound damping, 30mm spring preload/11.0 in. (280mm)	Kayaba, 18-position adjustable compression damping, 4-position adjustable rebound damping, 31mm spring preload/10.5 in. (267mm)
Weight	250 lbs. (113.4kg)	226 lbs. (102.5kg)
Wheelbase	56.0 to 57.2 in. (1422 to 1452mm)	53.3 to 54.4 in. (1354 to 1382mm)
Seat height	31.9 in. (810mm)	34.1 in. (865mm)
Steering head angle	26.5 degrees from vertical	27.0 degrees from vertical
Front wheel trail	4.33 in. (110mm)	4.53 in. (115mm)
Fuel capacity	2.6 gal. (9.8/), including 0.8 gal. (3.2/) reserve	2.9 gal. (11.0/), including 1.0 gal. (3.8/) reserve
Warranty	90 days	90 days
Available color	white only	white only

TRACK TEST: Honda XR200R

Forward, into the past.

• Most off-road riders have never seen the back side of a motocross starting gate, or the card-table confusion of an enduro checkpoint. In fact, most of those who do it in the dirt couldn't care less about holeshots or checkpoints. But despite their intent, those riders traditionally have been faced with a platoon of heart-attack-serious dirtbikes when it came to selecting a mount.

For those who consider off-road riding as something less important than the D-Day invasion, Honda offers an alternative—the XR200, a motorcycle that takes only one thing seriously: fun. The 200's genealogy gives you an indication of how far out of the competitive arena the bike is, because this latest entry into the ultra-competitive off-road world is assembled from two *old* motorcycles: The chassis came from last year's 200, while the engine is a veritable dinosaur, the two-valve motor from the 1983 XR200.

Of course, the chassis half of that equation isn't exactly the dirt world's equivalent to a stone axe. The XR's chassis includes an air-assisted fork with 37mm-diameter stanchion tubes and 9.4 inches of stroke, combined with a Pro-Link rear suspension featuring adjustable compression and rebound damping and 10.5 inches of travel.

That suspension makes the '86 XR200 something of a serious playbike, which is more or less what Honda intended. The suspension rates Honda chose reflect that recreational intent too, because overall, the XR200 is very softly suspended. For low-speed cow-trailing, that soft springing provides the plushest ride this side of a town car, which—along with the low seat height—instantly endears the XR to novices. In addition, the Honda's precise steering makes weaving through tight trails as simple as a flick of the handlebar.

Wick up the pace, however, and the fork protests by regularly slamming to its stops. The problem is not quite so critical at the rear, but over really fast, deep whoops the rear wheel will start to hop from side to side, even with both the compression and rebound damping dialed up.

If the spring rates suggest low- to moderate-speed riding, the XR's motor brings out that message loud and clear. The trick to making time with the 200 is to run it like a diesel car: Never back off. Yet while the single-overhead-cam thumper never produces an abundance of power, it somehow always manages to eke out just enough to make it over the next obstacle. Combined with the XR's smooth-shifting six-speed, the Honda thumper might not get you through the woods *first,* but it will get you through—it just takes a bit of patience and gear stirring.

If all this sounds as if the XR200 has some sharply defined limitations, you're right; it does. In fact, those limitations place the XR behind some serious enduro machines—notably, Kawasaki's KDX200—even when they are considered as playbikes. Yet for those who look at two-strokes as too bothersome or highstrung, the XR offers a low-ante entry into the woods, without taking itself too seriously. —*Jim Miller*

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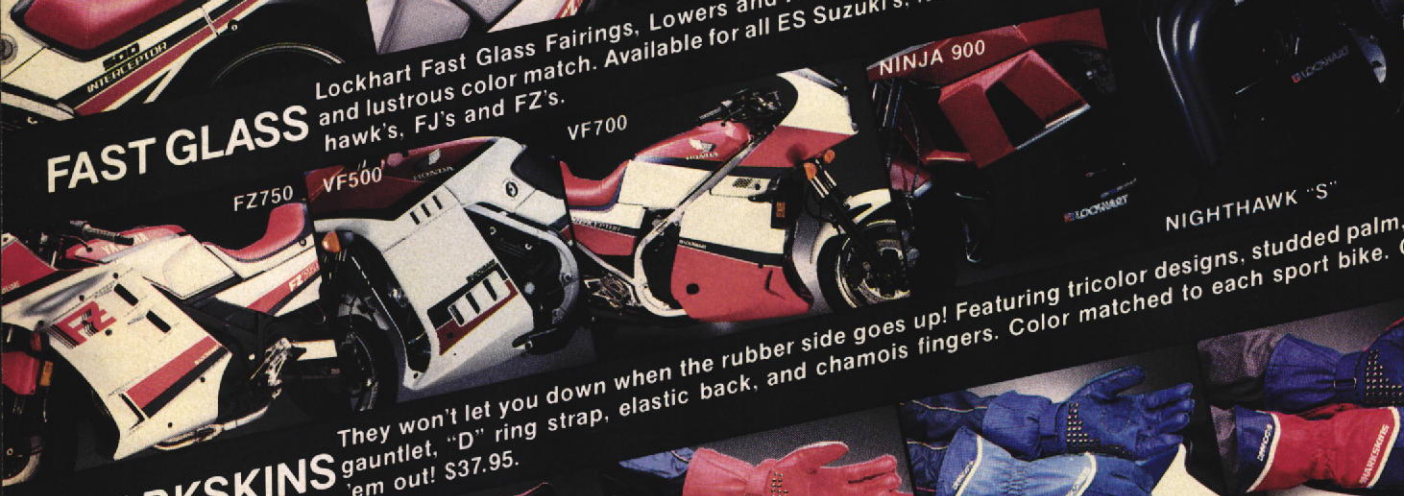

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Cycle Guide's True Tales of Racecourses, Dark Horses and Machines at Speed

BY DAIN GINGERELLI

Speed Racers

The fastest man on two wheels.

• There is only one fastest motorcycle racer in the world. That's a fact. And that racer is Don Vesco, who *drove* his dual-engine Kawasaki streamliner across the Bonneville Salt Flats in 1978 to a two way average of 318 mph. Nobody has gone faster on two wheels—period.

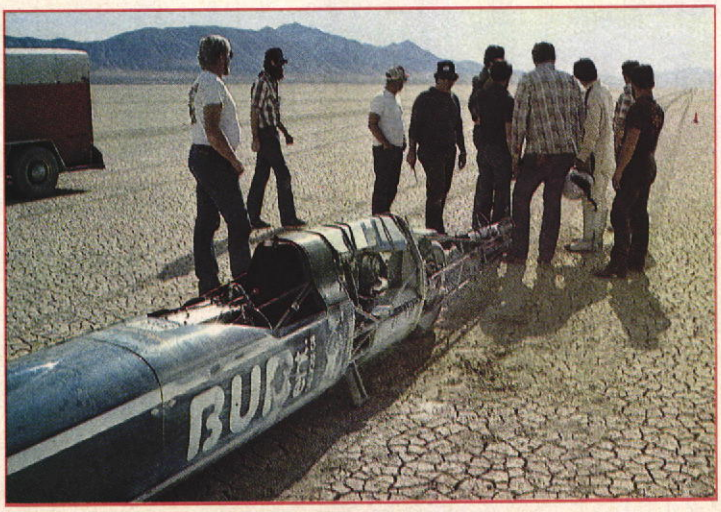
For racers pursuing the Land Speed Record, nothing is more absolute, more precious than the LSR. It's the touchstone of motorcycle performance.

One person who appreciates that fact is Dennis Manning, owner and builder of several LSRs, including the Harley-Davidson-powered 'liner driven by Cal Rayborn in the movie "On Any Sunday." "The Land Speed Record," Manning notes, "is the benchmark for measuring how fast all other motorcycles in the world can go. *Every* other motorcycle."

The LSR stands alone as the Mount Everest of racing, waiting to be conquered. The primary rule to remember is that only one racer can share the view from the summit at a single time. And that's the racer willing to push the speed envelope just a little farther than his competition. As builder of Rayborn's LSR, Manning shared the glory of setting the record at 265 mph in 1971, but he is philosophical about losing the LSR to Vesco seven years later. "It's not like Donnie beat me. It was like he just climbed a higher mountain." And there Vesco now sits, waiting for another climber to set a new standard, one the 47-year-old racer will himself look up to.

That driver could be Dan Kinsey, the man who pilots Manning's cigar-shaped racebike. If Manning could use only one word to describe Kinsey, it would be "brave." Because according to Manning, a person has to be brave to stuff himself inside one of these two-wheel missiles, then drive it through the measured mile at Bonneville at better than 300 mph. Literally covering the length of a football field in the blink of an eye.

How brave is brave? Consider that Vesco rocketed his rig, powered by two turbocharged Kawasaki 1016cc engines, through the measured mile doing about 450 feet per second; fast enough to cover a 1/4-mile in less than 3 seconds. Of that record run, Vesco recalls that "it was easy." Easy, in LSR terms, means there were no terrifying moments, like the rig wobbling or, worse yet, trying to launch itself off the deck due to aerodynamic lift, which can occur quickly and unexpectedly at 318 mph.



PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY HARLEY-DAVIDSON

Not every run, according to the LSR drivers, is a piece of cake like Vesco's 318-mph thriller. Vesco says the best thing to do when the "bike" starts to wobble is "back out

Continued

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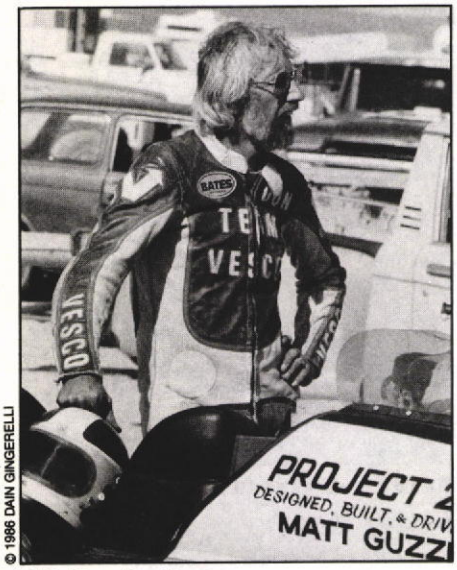

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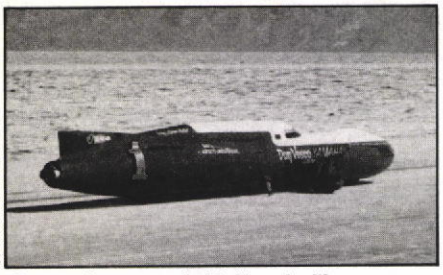
LSR driver, Don Vesco

Fastest man on two wheels.



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Vesco after a pass in his Yamaha 'liner

Shaking the salt one more time.

of it." Even so, as racers will often do, Vesco states that when his 25-foot 'liner starts oscillating at high speed, he figures he can still salvage the run: "You think the same old thing," he says, "that 'I can make it.' But I've never driven through it yet."

On the other hand, Vesco claims, some runs were so smooth "that I could remove my hands from the controls." Manning boasts the same of his new single-engine Harley-Davidson rig, "Tenacious": "Our 'liner has a hands-off ride."

But no LSR racer in his right mind would let go of the controls at 300-plus mph. A streamliner is long and low, making it slow to respond to the controls. And the fact that a liner steers by countersteer alone dictates a racer keep both hands firmly on the controls. With the rider strapped firmly in the cockpit, there is no room for body English, so the reactions of a Bonneville streamliner are different from those of a conventional motorcycle. "You can't shift your shoulders or move your butt to turn," says Vesco. "The only way you can steer it is through the handlebars."

And even then, that is sometimes not enough, especially when the flats are ruffled by the slightest crosswind. Once, during a record attempt, Vesco's rig was blown a 1/4-mile off course. Indeed, crosswinds are such a threat that the AMA won't allow a streamliner on the Salt Flats unless the wind speed is less than 3 mph.

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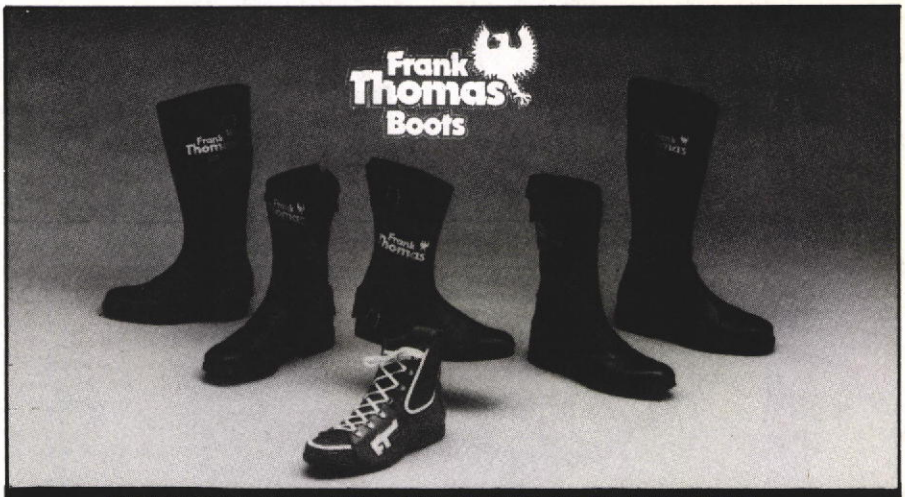

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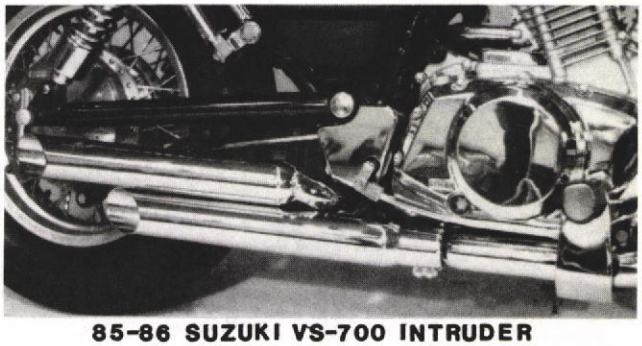

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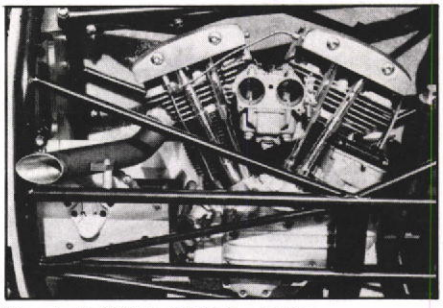

Manning's S&S-built Harley engine

With pistons the size of coffee cans.

These are lessons that Vesco has had years to learn. Indeed, Vesco has spent so much time with land-speed attempts that he should have enough of the Salt Flats in his blood to cause high blood pressure. Kinsey, on the other hand, is a relatively newcomer to LSR racing. He was adopted into the "Tenacious" LSR program only a couple of years ago. Ordinarily, the soft-spoken man from Wisconsin works for S&S Speed, the company that builds Manning's H-D race engines.

Manning's reason for putting a fairly unknown racer into a bike that has the potential of uprooting Vesco's record was simple. As he put it, "If we put a rank amateur in, he wouldn't have any bad habits to break."

Kinsey didn't disappoint Manning or let the S&S crew down, either. His two trial runs were both just a few ticks shy of 200 mph, the mini-Everest of LSR racing. "That's when I knew he was my driver," Manning recalls. Since that time, Kinsey has made several passes—and crashes—in Manning's Bub Enterprises-sponsored 'liner. And each time, he goes faster and faster, gaining more respect from Manning. "He'd be a good fighter pilot," Manning said. "He and Donnie (Vesco) are a lot alike."

Kinsey wants to be even more like Vesco this summer. Because that's when the Bonneville Salt Flats open for business. The business of Speed. And if Kinsey succeeds in his new enterprise, he can boast of being the fastest motorcycle racer in the world. A claim no one else can make.

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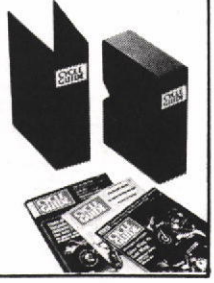

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Fast Talkers

A quick word with racers.

• There's an old saying in racing: It's not how fast you go, but how you go fast. And usually, it's the riders that determine how a motorcycle goes fast. As you might guess, those riders usually have something to say about their exploits. Here are a few interesting comments by some of them.

• Eddie Lawson, after he and Kenny Roberts shared rides at Willow Springs Raceway aboard a Yamaha Venture

© 1986 DAVID DEWHURST

On tour with Kenny and Eddie

Venturing out to Marlboro country.

during the 1984 press preview: "I scared him, then he scared me."

• Kenny Roberts about riding his FZ250 roadbike, comparing it to large-bore sportbikes: "I like to have just as much fun doing 30 as I can at 130. As long as I'm having that thrill, I'd rather have it at 30."

• Wes Cooley about racing 1024cc Superbikes 10 years ago: "We'd make a horsepower change, and sometimes I couldn't tell. They put out so much power in the first place, it really didn't make much difference."

• Dennis Manning about selecting a driver for "Tenacious," his Land Speed Record motorcycle: "A driver is like a spark plug. If it doesn't work, you unscrew it and put in another one."

• Don Vesco about driving his Kawasaki-powered streamliner 333 mph (fastest one-way run for a motorcycle) at the Bonneville Nationals one year: "I was just goofing around. I wanted to beat the car guys."

• Tony Lee, International Drag Bike Association president, about costs involved for Pro Stock dragracing: "Every tenth of a second costs thousands of dollars."

• Eddie Lawson describing a joy ride with a motorcycle policeman; the officer had expressed interest in Lawson's new V-Max, so Fast Eddie took him for a ride on it: "We went around the block on the bike, and I accelerated to 100 mph in no time. He was still in his uniform, and he was so scared, he bit his lip and bled on his shirt." (And, no, Lawson wasn't written up for speeding!) —*Dain Gingerelli*

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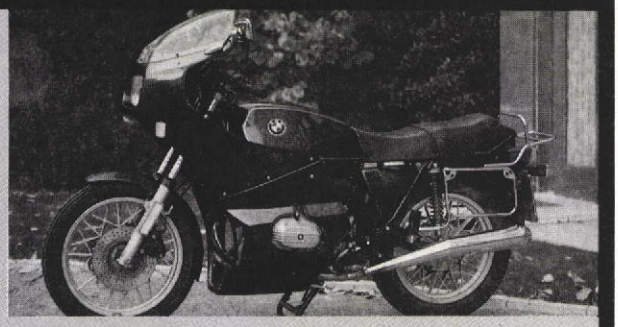

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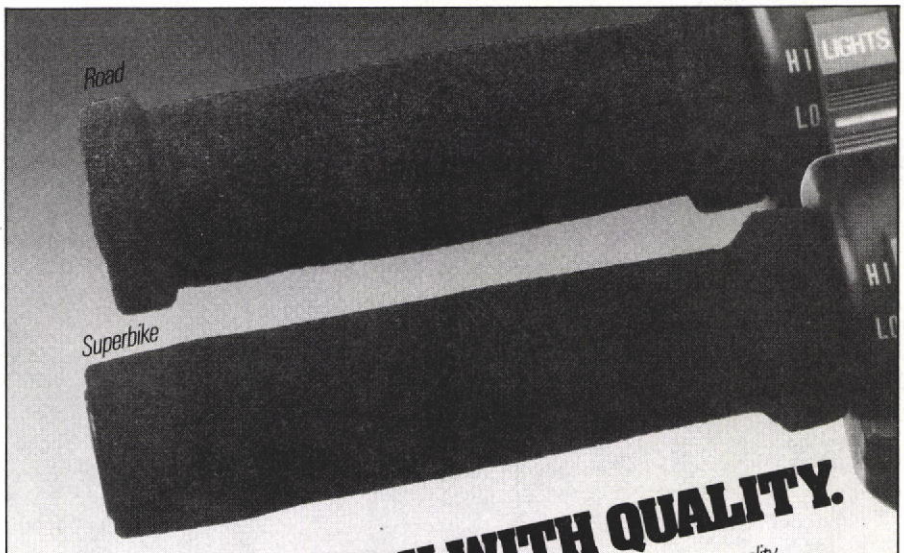

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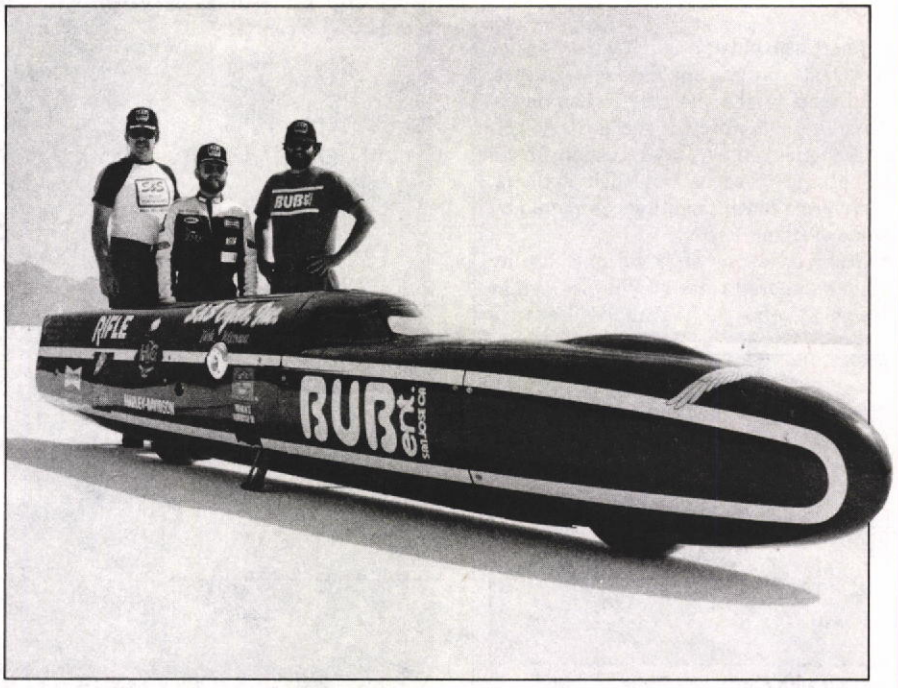
278 mph Crash—Recorded Live

• Dan Kinsey learned the hard way what it's like to crash a streamliner. He found out when he drove the Bub Enterprises-backed "Tenacious" at Bonneville for the first time. Kinsey had a tape recorder strapped to his chest for that run, lasting about a minute and a half. Here's what happened:

The tow truck releases Kinsey at 70 mph. A loud, metallic clunk indicates that the tow line and hook have separated. Kinsey reports, "OK, we're rolling." Shortly after, he says, "Ignition on," then the 200-horsepower Harley engine fires to life. A few seconds later, Kinsey says, "Skids up."

He accelerates to 200 mph in first gear, then makes a slow, deliberate shift into second. The engine guzzles the 93-percent nitro fuel mixture quickly, the vee-twin's staccato cadence sounding like that of a Chrysler Hemi top-fueler.

Within a minute, "Tenacious" eclipses 265 mph, and Kinsey finds fourth gear. With a 1.3:1 final drive ratio, the Harley's spark plugs fire approximately 550 times every mile. As he accelerates in top gear, a gust of wind



George Smith of S&S, Dan Kinsey and Dennis Manning with "Tenacious"

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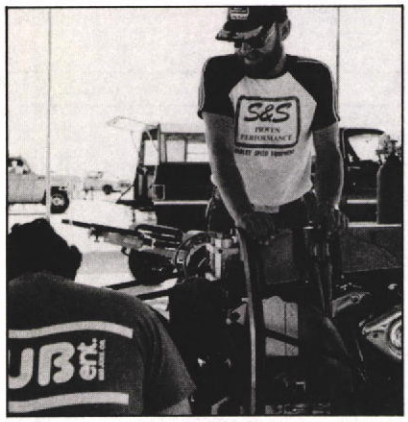

Kinsey and crew make last-minute check

Treating 450 ft./sec. with respect.

Kinsey is briefed before his run

Pulling out the stops for 278 mph.

catches his missile-shaped 'liner, forcing it to the side. Kinsey closes the throttle momentarily, then feeds more of the volatile nitro fuel into the engine.

The crosswind becomes too much for Kinsey, and "Tenacious" begins wobbling fiercely. Kinsey has no time to react, other than pull the parachute-release cord as the 'liner bangs down on its side, still doing more than 270 mph. The chute keeps the cigar-shaped 'liner's nose pointed forward, preventing the bike from crashing end over end, but the 1350-pound racebike rolls from side to side, "like a weenie on a grill," as Dennis Manning later describes it.

The grinding noise of "Tenacious" slowing to a halt lasts only a few seconds. Then silence, except for Kinsey's attempts to steady his breathing. Then the metallic clank of shoulder harnesses being released. The ambulance crew arrives about the time Kinsey exits the mangled cockpit, and he says with a voice as calm as a grocery-store checker's, "Hi. How you doing?"

The paramedics respond, "Are you hurt anywhere?" Kinsey doesn't answer while he brushes the salt from his driving suit, then says, "That was a hell of a ride." He forgot to add that it was a hell of a crash, too. —*Dain Gingerelli*

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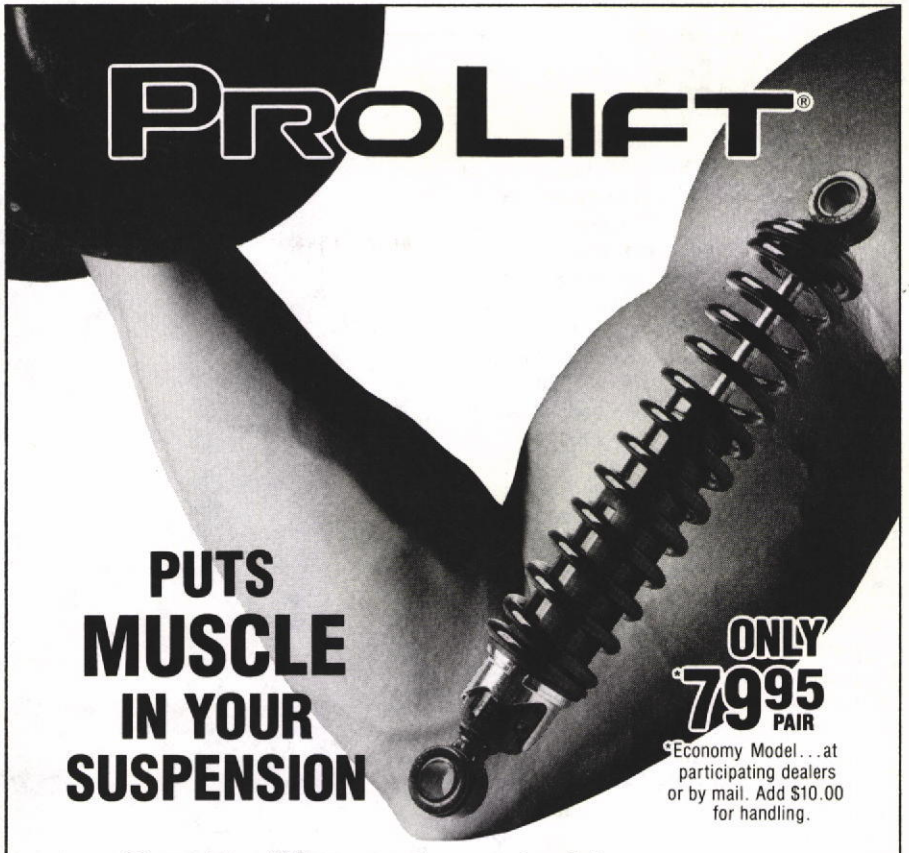

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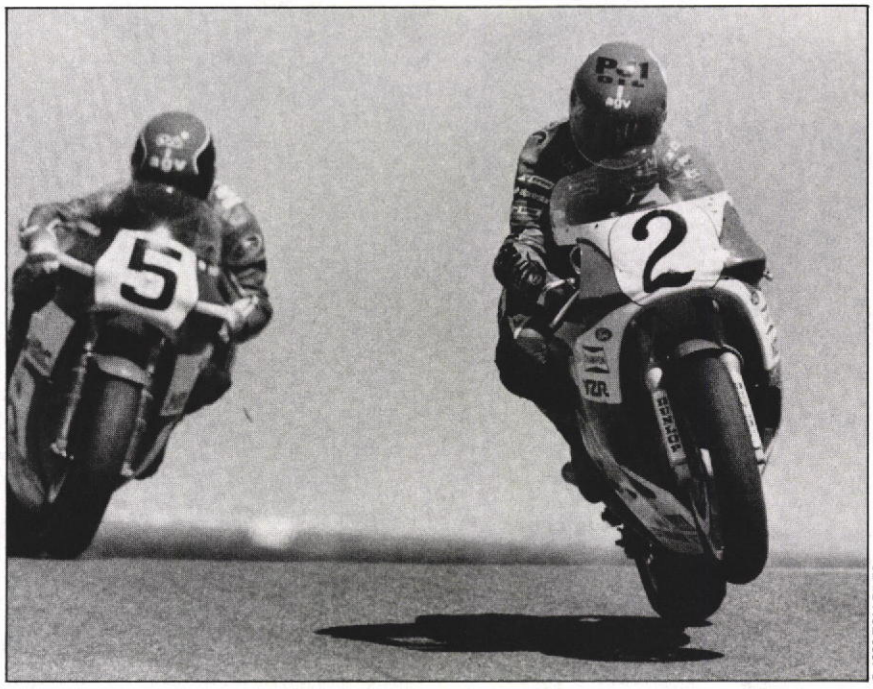
Pit Bits

• Nissan 200: The 1986 Laguna Seca National roadrace will be sponsored by Nissan Motor Corp. The announcement was made shortly after Champion Spark Plug Co., the race's previous sponsor, withdrew from motorcycling entirely. Nissan will continue sponsorship of the USGP (500cc motocross) and the ABC Superbikers, both Carlsbad events.

• We are the world: The goal shared by Nissan, and Laguna Seca promoters Lee Moselle and Kenny Roberts, is more than simply to continue the AMA-sanctioned 200-mile roadrace at the Monterey, California, track. "Speaking for motorcyclists," Roberts said, "we're trying to get a world championship to Laguna Seca." Target date is 1988.

• KR at Laguna: While Roberts campaigns for a USGP, he has not scrapped plans to compete in the AMA National at Laguna Seca, July 13. As of early May, however, The King wasn't certain what brand of motorcycle he would race. "It may very well be Italian," he said, initiating speculation that he'll ride a Cagiva vee-four if Yamaha won't provide him with a YZR500. "Yamaha hasn't decided



Nissan will sponsor the Laguna Seca National, July 13

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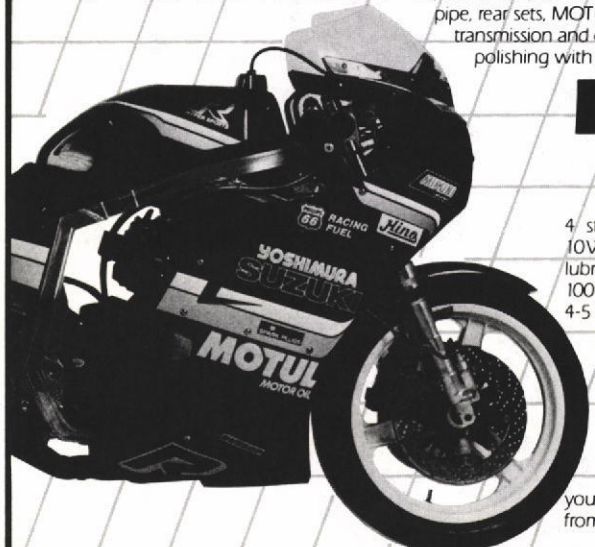

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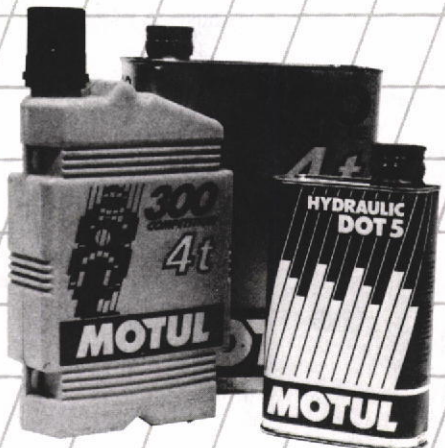

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what they want to do," he said, "so I may have to make the decision for them."

• Mario Roberts: Two days before Mario Andretti finished fifth at the Championship Auto Racing Teams Long Beach Grand Prix (for cars), he was interviewed by a local newspaper about his 1985 race season, in which he broke two ribs while playing on his motorcycle. The injury, claimed the former Formula One World Driving Champion, hampered his chances of winning the CART championship. Andretti attributed the accident to "doing something stupid, trying to be Kenny Roberts."

• No noise: The Oregon Motorcycle Road Racing Association is concerned about noise abatement. Enough so that a special code was included in the club's 1986 rule book, that holds a racer responsible if his bike exceeds the city of Portland's noise limits. According to the rule, if the club is cited, the offender will compensate OMRRA $250, the amount of the fine levied by the city.

• Suzuki reed-valve: Suzuki is taking 500cc Grand Prix racing seriously again. Australian Paul Lewis tested—with favorable results—a new reed-valve square-four engine in his Team Heron-Skoal Bandit last spring, and will use the engine in the first few rounds of the GP. The new engine replaces the rotary-valve square-four that has been the mainstay of Suzuki's GP racing since 1975. The new engine, according to Lewis, has a less abrupt power delivery. But if rumors are correct, the new engine is only a stop-gap measure to keep Suzuki competitive until the new vee-four is ready later this season.

• Eight isn't enough: As Steve Eklund (AMA #8) approaches the golden years of his racing career—he's 30—his goals have changed. "I know I'll race until I'm 34," he said. "Right now, I feel like I'm about 23." Eklund added that he doesn't necessarily desire another Grand National championship to go with the CPS crown he won in 1979; he's looking for something more tangible. "Now, my main goal is to make money. The sport has become more expensive than when I began racing, so your goals change."

• And more goals: Defending AMA Champion, Bubba Shobert, also feels like he's 23, because he is. But his goals differ from those of Eklund. "One of them is to win the Camel Pro national championship again. I really want to make something out of the championship, besides just being able to say I was a champion. I'd also like to break some records this year."

• Going Continental: While nobody at the Continental tire company is talking about the Camel Pro Series, it appears likely that West Germany's largest motorcycle tire company will produce a flattrack rac-

Continued

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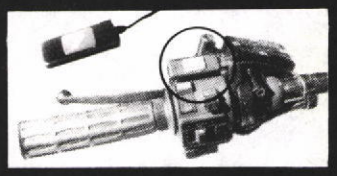

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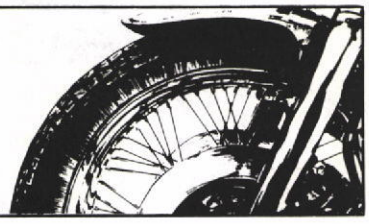

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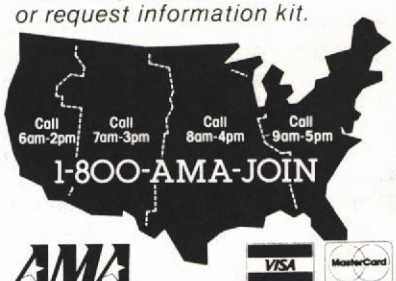

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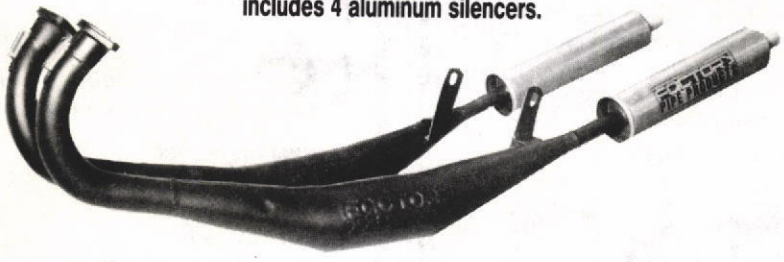

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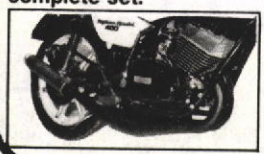

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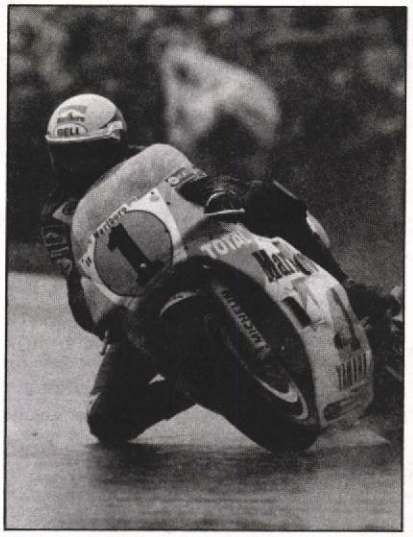
ing tire for the CPS. According to sources, a special tire test was conducted by Continental and Honda at Sacramento, April 13. No results were given, but look for Continental to join Carlisle and Goodyear before the end of this season.

• Smoking in the Camel Pro: Tire are becoming a major concern for all the CPS race teams. In particular, Shobert's rear tire deteriorated late in the Sacramento Mile last April, giving the win to Harley-Davidson's Scott Parker, a scenario that wound up a virtual repeat of last September's race. According to one Honda team member at the April event, Shobert's rear tire was spinning so fiercely in the turns that it was smoking at the apex.

• Jorgy, Ascot and Scott: Alex Jorgensen rode Ron Wood's Wood-Rotax to first place at the Ascot TT, April 18, tying Gary Scott's record of five National wins there. Ironically, it was Jorgensen who broke Scott's string of five straight Ascot TT wins in 1978. Since 1982, Jorgy has won four of Ascot's six TTs.

• ASCOT: Ascot Park, built by J.C. Agajanian in the '50s, is perhaps the most famous dirttrack in America. While most people conclude that the Southern California track was named after the famous horse-racing track in England, the Agajanian family says otherwise. A sign hung in the track's press room spells out the meaning of ASCOT—Agajanian's Southern California Oval Track.

• Quote Department: If you want to know where America's better roadracers go to race, just ask Roberts. In an interview about Grand Prix roadracing, KR said, "The real good riders are going to Europe to ride the GP, and the remainder are staying here to ride something called Superbike."



Eddie Lawson in the West German rain

He'd rather be in Upland, California.

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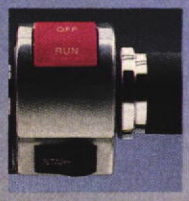

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Winners & Losers

Keyboard Quarter-Mile

Vance & Hines gets with the program.

• Terry Vance, the most successful Pro Stock dragracer in the business, has been replaced by a computer. About a year and a half ago, Vance was eliminated as the race team's primary 1/4-mile test rider. The Vance & Hines computer, a Tandy VM-3, now handles those chores.

"We used the computer," Vance said, "to elevate our whole program." That program includes testing new products, and preparing the V&H GS1150 Pro Stock bike for dragracing.

The computer program, developed by Steve Derksen, works like this: Byron Hines uses the company's dynomometer to test an all-new engine or a new component. He takes the numbers, including torque, horsepower and engine rpm, from that dyno run and keypunches them into Derksen's program. A few minutes later, the projected 1/4-mile time and top speed for that particular engine is known.

Sounds easy. But according to Derksen many hours were invested developing the program. The pay-off is consistent 1/4-mile times—on the computer. Among other advantages, the program simplifies testing by removing some of the guesswork. "We've eliminated a big variable," Derksen said. "The driver."

Derksen's program is quite acccurate, too. It projected that Vance would do an 8.19-second ET at Gainesville, Florida, last March. Vance proved that it'll take more than a machine to replace him, though, and out-did the Tandy VM-3 by 0.01-second, also good for the NHRA Pro Stock record.

In all, Derksen's program has 28 variables. Such inconsistencies as wind speed, air density, frontal area of the bike and rider, gearing, traction, launch rpm, tire growth at top speed, even shift lag (time of each shift) are programmed into the VM-3. These numbers, says Derksen, are based on Vance's Pro Stock racer, and would actually differ for other racebikes. But by using these constants, the team knows if a new race engine is going to be competitive or not.

"But anytime we want to change a variable, we just punch in the numbers," Derksen said. Say, for instance, they want to change final-drive gearing. Derksen just taps a few keys, and it's done. Same with carburetor jetting, or even track conditions. Then they make another pass through the computer, to

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Pro Stock king, Terry Vance

Punching in at 8.19 seconds.

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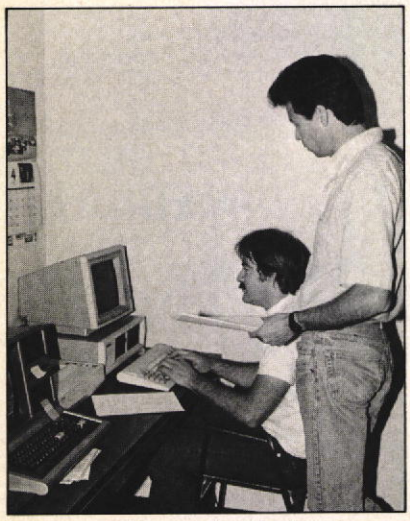
see if the change helped. As an example, Derksen ran the numbers through on a customer's engine that had just been dyno tested by Hines. The 1260cc Suzuki Pro Stock engine, belonging to Phil Tannery, produced 210.3619 horsepower at 11,000 rpm on the V&H dyno. Using the variables set for Vance's bike, Derksen geared Tannery's engine with a 15-tooth front and a 46-tooth rear sprocket, then made a pass. The simulated track conditions were for Gainesville. The resulting pass: 8.285 seconds/160.890 mph, on the computer.

Derksen changed the rear sprocket to a 47-tooth, then sat back as he made another run through the VM-3 1/4-mile. Tannery's hypothetical ET dropped to 8.269, while the top speed improved to 161.032 mph. In addition, the computer gave read outs every 0.20-seconds during the pass, showing the engine RPM, bike's speed, engine torque and horsepower *during each interval.*

The VM-3 has earned its keep in other ways, too. Vance said that they used Derksen's program to test and develop the Pro Comp Only exhaust pipe, a system sold over-the-counter to racers across the country. Practically all of the PCO's quarter-mile testing was done with the VM-3. "We have a money-back guarantee with that pipe," Vance said, "and we haven't had any refunds yet."

All of this computer wizardry raises another question: Will the dragracer of the '90s look like R2D2? Hardly. As Vance said, "Dragracing is 90 percent bike, 10 percent rider. If you hit the lights right, you stand a good chance of winning. That is, if you have the right equipment." And it's that extra 10 percent—the rider—that makes dragracing, like every other form of motorsport, a test of man *and* machine. ●

—Dain Gingerelli



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Derksen and Vance make a keyboard pass

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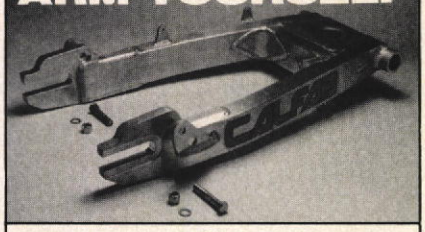

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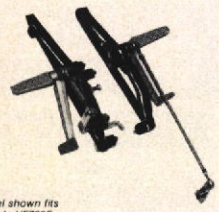

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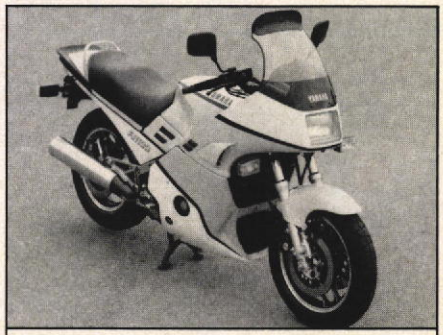

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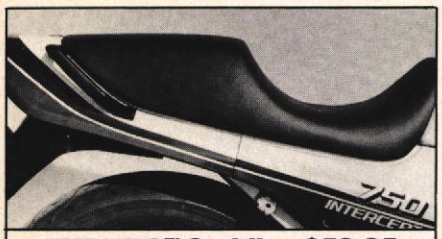

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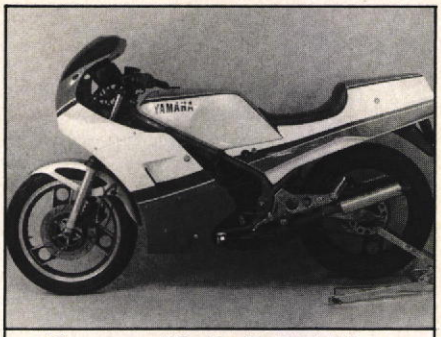

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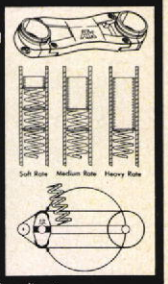

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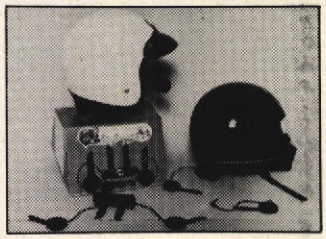

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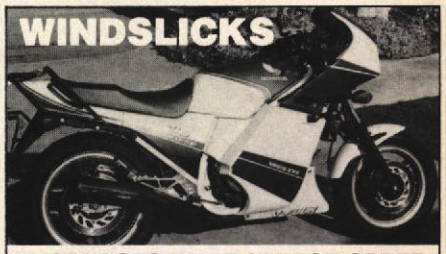

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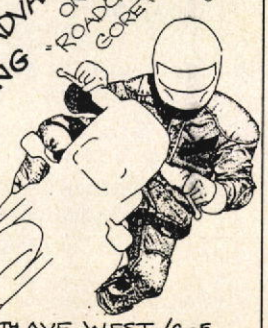

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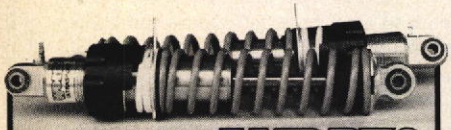

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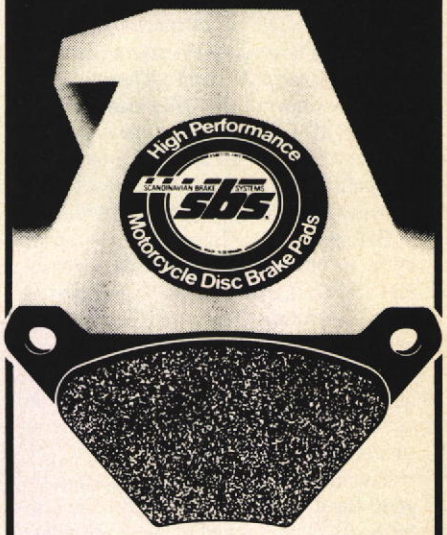

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Setting It Right

A Fitting Argument

Bend your body to the wheel?

• The reasonable man adapts himself to society, as George Bernard Shaw observed; the unreasonable man expects society to adapt to him. Therefore, all progress depends on the unreasonable man. That is why there has been so little motorcycling progress (or am I being unreasonable?), for in this, as in most things, man has found it too easy to adapt himself.

Before adapting himself to the motorcycle, he adapted that from the pedal-cycle; and that in turn was an adaptation from the horse. There, surely, was the original mistake: He should never had adapted himself to that absurdly unsuitable creature. Had the Almighty intended us to ride horses, He would have given us universal joints at the knees.

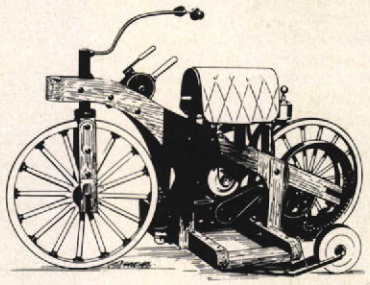
The horse, by a process that defied the good Lord's gift of genes, begat the hobby-horse. Man tacked a wheel onto each end, creating the velocipede, and before civilization knew what was happening, we were up to our ears in pedal-cycles. When in due course the devil offered us the gasoline engine as a substitute for pedals, we changed little else; and that, in short, is why many bikes still demand universal joints at the knees.

Setright was early faced with the adaptive problems induced by this erratic genealogy. For my 12th birthday, I was offered the choice of a 12-gauge Anson & Deeley or a good pedal cycle, and craven practicality prompted me to opt for the latter. Only later, when I had read my way into some familiarity with GBS, did I realize I should have accepted the gun and shot the chap who had the bicycle.

The next problem was my desire for dropped handlebars, inviting a parental suspicion that I had been keeping bad company. It was explained to me that a racing crouch was only acceptable among jockeys and persons of that sort; gentlemen sat upright. It took weeks of protest to demonstrate that what was applicable to the horse might not be right for the bicycle, since in the former case it was the horse that was doing the work but in the latter it was the rider.

Protest as I may, nearly all motorcycles still have too much in common with the horse. Confound it, we have an engine to do the work; why should we adopt a riding position that makes us have to work merely to stay on the machine?

It is all very well for cross-country mud-plugging and dune-bashing, where



the rider is expected to stay on his feet and the main purpose of the wheels appears to be to keep his feet off the ground. It is all very well for your refined long-distance legal-limit straight-roads tourer, where by all means you may lie back and rest and have Nanny tuck you up nice and cozy while the stereo plays a tape of Nanny's voice reading you a bedtime story. But for a quick and mettlesome roadburner, agape to devour the straights and agog to go ear'oling through the corners (never mind if Mama fears you have been keeping bad company; the *h* in *ear'oling* is *never* sounded)—for such a bike, the upright gentleman's posture is all very wrong.

Of physiological necessity you should keep a straight back, but you should not keep it upright. As soon as you are going fast, or even accelerating hard, the tensile loads developing in your arms will impart a bending moment to the lumbar region of your spine, and that is bad for you. So is what happens to your abdominal contents: Abdominal muscles were designed for when your ancestors went on all fours; only when you revert to that position are your guts property supported. Buck a bump or two at high speed, and you should feel the difference.

Do not tip your torso so far forward that it is quite horizontal. There is no need to go whole hog; you should find that your forelegs are longer than those of the pig—but some of that extra reach should allow you to stretch your arms to handlebars sufficiently low and far forward to ensure that the arms are always straight and in compression. If the grips are the same distance apart as your shoulder joints, your arms will be parallel, so most of your steering may be done with the muscles that are most powerful, those of the shoulders.

Now let me distract you for a moment. Grasp a twistgrip rubber, or something of similar size (though grips *should* be much fatter), in your hand. See how it naturally lies at about 45 degrees to your forearm? Let that arm drop so that all but the hand is relaxed; now raise the arm straight ahead. See the angle of the grip? That is how is should sprout from the bike's steering head, generally about 45 degrees downward and 45 degrees backward—but it hardly ever does. Handlebars are never in the right place, never at the correct angle, and there is less and less chance of putting them where they should be, as fairings grow more and more elaborate and immovable.

Almost as bad are footrests, which seem to have been left where somebody put them in about 1904. Aftermarket rearsets seldom make enough difference, shifting the location only 4 or 5 inches; what is really wanted is that the feet should be nearly back to the rear spindle—but nowadays there is always a flatulent great muffler in the way. So your feet are undesirably far forward, and if your torso angle is correct, you will be jolly uncomfortable in the hips and knees. This calls for a stiff upper lip as well as a straight back, but is commonly dealt with by splaying the legs so that the knees stick out into the wind. From astern it looks hilariously reminiscent of a frog learning to water ski; after a few score miles at consistently high speeds, it feels as though the wind is trying to tear your legs apart and cast them away. Why do we suffer such discomfort?

Don't answer that you need to stick your knees out anyway when cornering. That is rank heresy or else empty-headed imitation of the antics of track racers whose needs and styles are irrelevant to road riding, no matter how fast. If your bike corners better with your knees out, there is something wrong about your bike.

My last Dresda was tailored for me to ride as I have described. Nothing else on two wheels has ever been so comfortable, at any speed (up to 155 mph, anyway) or over any distance up to a non-stop tankful (which was admittedly only about 130 miles, and could occupy less than 1 ½ hours); and nothing else made me feel so much in control. While cars have adjustable seats and even horses have adjustable stirrups, we motorcyclists are expected to bend and twist ourselves to fit some utterly alien standard. Is that reasonable?

—L.J.K. Setright

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Shoei continues the award-winning RF Series with the introduction of the RF-Vogue. Available in four new and exciting color graphic combinations for 1986, the RF-Vogue advances the pursuit of technology and comfort for Shoei safety helmets.

With a shell construction of precision-molded Kevlar and fiberglass, for a super-strong yet lightweight helmet, we've mounted a 3-dimensionally curved shield of ultra-hard polycarbonate, providing you excellent peripheral vision with virtually no distortion.

Unsurpassed comfort is achieved with our exclusive OCV-Open/Close Ventilation System which directs air through ventilator grooves in the helmet liner, exiting "stuffy" air by way of outlets at the neckline. For even greater airflow, the shield opens to any of 7 latched positions with finger-tip ease.

With the RF-Vogue, Shoei achieves the ultimate; leading the way for others to follow.

Achieving the ultimate
The Shoei RF-Vogue

SHOEI®

Approved: Snell M85, SHCA,AMA. Meets or exceeds DOT218. Sizes: XS through XL.

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